

NARRATIVES
OF THE LIVES
OF THE MORE
EMINENT FATHERS

OF THE
Three First Centuries;

INTERSPERSED WITH
COPIOUS QUOTATIONS FROM THEIR WRITINGS,
Familiar Observations
ON THEIR CHARACTERS AND OPINIONS,
AND OCCASIONAL REFERENCES

TO THE
MOST REMARKABLE EVENTS AND PERSONS
OF THE TIMES IN WHICH THEY LIVED.

INSCRIBED, BY PERMISSION, TO THE HON. AND RIGHT REV. THE
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

BY THE

REV. ROBERT COX, A. M.

PERPETUAL CURATE OF ST. LEONARD'S, BRIDGNORTH.

"Antiquam exquirite matrem."

"He assumes the honourable style of a Christian. To specify his persuasion yet more, he tells us, that he is of the same belief our Saviour taught, the apostles disseminated, the fathers authorized, and the martyrs confirmed."

Dr. Johnson's Life of Sir T. Browne.

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1817.

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To the Hon. and Right Rev. HENRY Lord Bishop of
GLOUCESTER,

IN WHOSE SOLID PIETY AND ACTIVE BENEVOLENCE,

WHILST A PRIVATE CLERGYMAN,

HIS FRIENDS COULD NOT BUT TRACE

Features of resemblance to the Presbyters of the three first Centuries;

AND WHOSE HOLY ZEAL, WISDOM, MODERATION, AND EFFECTIVE
AND INCESSANT LABOURS

IN HIS EPISCOPAL OFFICE

Remind the public of the Bishops of the same period;

WHILST ALL THE PRAISE IS ASCRIBED BY HIMSELF,

And should be ascribed by that Church

WHICH HE LOVES AND BENEFITS,

TO THE GRACE OF GOD,

These Narratives of the Lives and Sentiments of the early Fathers

ARE INSCRIBED

AS A SMALL TOKEN

OF THE AUTHOR'S CORDIAL ESTEEM AND UNFEIGNED
RESPECT.

PREFACE.

IF the principal business of a biographer be “to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life,”* the subjects of the following Work may at first sight appear to afford a barren soil for his operations. Of some of them neither the period of their birth, nor the time nor manner of their death, can be ascertained; of others little is known, except the circumstances connected with their martyrdom; and even of those, whose actions and characters have most escaped the ravages of time, scarcely any thing can be accurately ascertained respecting their retired moments, or domestic peculiarities.

After we have given, however, full weight to these objections, it may still be confidently asserted that the subjects of these narratives possess some peculiar biographical attractions. The more early of the fathers, whose lives are here recorded, were intimately acquainted with the apostles of our

* Rambler, No. 60.

Lord, were themselves deservedly styled “apostolical men,” and manifested a degree of zeal and piety scarcely inferior to that of their inspired predecessors. Even those of them who were the most remote from the times of the apostles, though they rarely possessed the evangelical simplicity of their earlier brethren, still flourished during that interesting period of the Church, when persecution was continually developing the character of nominal Christians, clearing the sacred inclosure of the noxious weeds of hypocrisy, and maturing the consecrated fruits of genuine Christianity.

Of such persons, whilst we lament the loss of a minute detail, every circumstance is interesting. Every incident of their lives, and almost every expression of their writings, is important: the one exhibits the habits of the early disciples, the other their sentiments; and both not unfrequently supply a satisfactory comment on the Sacred Writings. At the same time the family likeness, which pervades the whole circle, evidently indicates that its different members, though distinguished from each other by a variety of features and complexion, are all children of the same parent.

The apostolical Clement, the bold Ignatius, the venerable Polycarp, the philosophic Justin, the severe Tertullian, the speculative Origen, and the fervid Cyprian, widely dissimilar as they are in natural disposition and attainments, manifest a remarkable uniformity in religious sentiments and experience,—and are actuated by the same prin-

ciples, and supported by the same consolations. None of them advocate those abstruse subjects of divinity, the canvassing of which has caused such unhappy divisions in the Church since the times of Augustine, whilst the doctrines of human depravity, the Trinity, the Divinity, incarnation, and atonement of Christ, and of salvation by faith in Him, run through all their writings. At the same time holiness of heart and life, deadness to the world, love to their Divine Redeemer, and to their fellow-Christians for His sake, form the most prominent part of their exhortations, and are embodied in their lives.

Whilst, however, the compiler of these narratives readily acknowledges the satisfaction with which he records the excellencies of the fathers, he as plainly asserts, that he feels no inclination to conceal or palliate their defects. His object is, to fulfil the office of a faithful biographer, not that of a partial panegyrist. He deprecates no less that spurious charity which glosses over the failings of the fathers, than that unfeeling levity which can derive pleasure from the contemplation of their defects. It is his desire no less specifically to point out their errors than their excellencies; the one, indeed, with grief, as a salutary beacon to others; the other with joy, as an encouraging evidence of the reality and efficacy of genuine piety.

Whilst, therefore, he feelingly laments the scantiness of his materials, and still more deeply regrets his own inability to do justice to such as are

actually in his possession, he cheers himself with the hope that his humble publication will not prove altogether uninteresting ; and that even those who may justly censure its execution will candidly acknowledge that its tendency is good—a tendency to promote the interests of our common Christianity.

With these pleasing—may they not prove fallacious—expectations, he submits the following narratives to the public eye, as a humble thank-offering to that gracious Being who, when the ability to provide a more suitable one was wanting, did not reject the widow's mite.

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LIVES

OF THE

PRIMITIVE FATHERS.

SIMEON.

CHAPTER I.

Simeon's relationship to our Lord—probably one of the seventy disciples.—The martyrdoms of James, the son of Zebedee, and of James the Just.—Simeon is elected bishop of Jerusalem.

DIFFERENT sentiments are entertained respecting the importance to be attached to hereditary honours and exalted birth ; but every pious Christian will readily acknowledge, that the subject of the present memoir derives additional interest from the circumstance of his relation, by both his parents, to our blessed Saviour. His father, Cleopas, was the brother of Joseph, and his mother

the sister of the Holy Virgin. Great, however, as may be esteemed the honour of being thus personally related to the Lord Jesus Christ, it was an infinitely greater one, that he was a partaker of a similar spirit, and interested in His great salvation ; a privilege, indeed, of which every genuine believer is equally a partaker. Hence, when the woman in the Gospel, struck with admiration of the authority and eloquence of our Lord's teaching, exclaimed, " Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked," fearing lest she should rest satisfied with a transient impression of His excellency, instead of seeking to derive from Him real and permanent benefit, He answered, with a wisdom and tenderness peculiarly His own, " Yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

Simeon, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, was probably a native of that city. He was born about thirteen years before our Lord's incarnation : but of the circumstances and situation of his parents we are not informed. The former part of his own life also affords a barren field for the labours of a biographer ; for we search almost in vain for a vestige of the employments, opinions, and residence, of this venerable father, during the first seventy-five years of his life.

It is generally supposed that he was of the order of the Rechabites, that pious sect among the Jews, who, for the strict obedience they paid to the injunctions of their father Jonadab, furnished so

powerful a contrast to the base ingratitude and disobedience of Israel to God.*

According to Hegesippus, when our Lord entered upon His public ministry, Simeon became His constant disciple and regular attendant. He is also supposed to have been one of those seventy who were commissioned by our Lord to go before Him through the different parts of Judea, and prepare the people for the reception of His doctrine. They are mentioned in the Scriptures only in one place, † where their first mission appears to have been restricted to the Jewish nation. We have, however, no reason to suppose that their authority was withdrawn after they had fulfilled this charge, but may rather conclude, that they were in general employed amongst the first evangelists, in declaring through different countries the glad tidings of salvation. Amongst this company we may reasonably suppose, that the venerable subject of the present memoir was engaged during the most efficient years of his life. But of the nature of his labours, or the success of his ministry, we have no record. There is, however, a book written, in which all the actions of the righteous are fully and faithfully preserved; and a day is approaching, “when they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

* See Jeremiah, chap. xxxv.

† Luke x. 1.

At length in the year 62, we meet with Simeon at Jerusalem ; but whether he regularly resided there, or was in that city merely on a visit, is not ascertained. He was called, however, at that time to witness a scene truly affecting, which was the means of ultimately fixing him as a bishop in that most important situation.

The malignity of the Jews against the Christians had long been proverbial. Eighteen years before this period, James, the son of Zebedee, the first of the apostles who suffered martyrdom, was slain by the order of Herod Agrippa, to gratify the murderous spirit of the people. A remarkable circumstance attending his martyrdom is recorded by Eusebius. The man, who had drawn him before the tribunal, when he saw the readiness with which he submitted to his fate, was struck with remorse ; and by one of those sudden conversions, which have more frequently happened in times of persecution than of peace, and are then more worthy of being considered genuine, was himself turned from the power of Satan to God. In a moment, from a persecutor he became a martyr, boldly owned Christ to be his Saviour, and, as they walked on together to the place of execution, earnestly entreated the apostle's forgiveness. James readily granted this request, embraced him as a brother, and pronounced on him his apostolic benediction, "Peace be unto thee." They were then beheaded together.

This wonderful and interesting conversion of an

opposer appears to have produced little or no effect on the minds of the Jewish people. Peter was shortly after imprisoned, and rescued from martyrdom, only by a miracle; and Paul, whose death they had long been plotting, narrowly avoided the fate they intended him by appealing to Cæsar.

Irritated by the defeat they had sustained, the Jews were now determined to wreak their vengeance upon James, surnamed The Just, bishop of Jerusalem, who is also frequently called James the Less, to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee. In this attempt they made no doubt of succeeding, as he was merely a Jew, and could therefore plead no Roman privilege.

The interval between the death of their old governor Festus, and the arrival of his successor, was deemed by Ananias, the high priest, who was invested with the supreme power until Albinus should arrive, as a propitious opportunity for executing their design. He therefore called a council, before which he summoned James, and accused him of breaking the law of Moses. But it was not an easy matter to procure the condemnation of this apostle. His holy character extorted reverence, where it failed to generate affection; and numbers, who could not bear his religious principles, were constrained to admire the gentleness of his manners, and the excellency of his life.

At length the council persuaded the apostle to mount one of the pinnacles of the temple, and declare to the people, who were assembled to cele-

brate the passover, his sentiments respecting Christianity; hoping that they should prevail upon him, under some plausible pretence, to renounce his principles. James standing where he was bid, was then desired by the Jews to declare what was the gate of salvation;* or, in other words, the true means of obtaining eternal life. The holy apostle, undaunted by the number and power of his enemies, immediately replied, that Jesus Christ was the door of salvation; probably alluding to our Lord's own words, "I am the door of the sheep." He then enlarged upon the glory and dignity of the Saviour, and declared his belief that He was then sitting at the right hand of power, and that He would come in the clouds of heaven.

Several of the people, struck with the holy fervour of the apostle, and, we may add, with the force of truth suddenly breaking in upon their minds, glorified God, and exclaimed aloud, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Ananias and the rulers, finding that their attempts to ensnare him were without success, suddenly changed their mode of attack, and cry in gout with apparent horror, that Justus himself was seduced, threw the apostle down from the place where he stood. Though severely bruised by the fall, he had strength to

* "Gate, among the Jews, signifies metaphorically the entrance, introduction, or means of acquiring any thing. So they talk of the gate of repentance, the gate of prayers, and the gate of tears."—Dr. A. Clarke's Commentary.

kneel down and to pray, " I beseech thee, Lord God and Father, for them ; for they know not what they do." In the mean time the infatuated Jews preparing to stone him, a Rechabite, whom Hege-sippus declares to be the subject of this memoir, cried out, " Cease, what do you mean ? This just man is praying for you." At length a person, more mercifully cruel than the rest, came behind, and striking him on the head with a fuller's club, completed his martyrdom.

This apostle is supposed to have written his epistle but a very short time before his death. On account of his singular innocence and integrity he was distinguished by the exalted title of **THE JUST** : and the universally admitted excellence of his character made his execution to be abhorred, and his murderers to be censured, even by those who were far from being favourable to the Christian name.

Upon the martyrdom of James, those of the apostles, who were still alive, and several of the most eminent disciples of our Lord, are said to have come to Jerusalem from all parts, to consult together respecting a proper successor. It was their general opinion, that, if possible, a relative of our Lord ought to be appointed to the situation ; and at length they unanimously determined to confer the honour upon Simeon, as a man of eminent piety, and a near relation of the Saviour. He was accordingly ordained bishop of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER II.

An account of the destruction of Jerusalem.—The Christians flee to Pella.—Simeon suffers martyrdom.—The longevity of the early fathers remarkable.

WE have little information of the manner in which Simeon fulfilled the important duties of his sacred office. We may, however, be confident that his charge was a most trying one, both on account of the turbulent temper of the Jewish people, and because his presidency fell in with that gloomy period, when their city and temple were overthrown, and their very name as a nation blotted out by the victorious Romans. "To give a particular account of all their iniquities," remarks their own celebrated historian, "would be endless: thus much in general it may suffice to say, that there never was a city which suffered such miseries, or a race of men from the beginning of the world who so abounded in wickedness. I verily believe," he continues, "that if the Romans had delayed to destroy these wicked wretches, the city would either have been swallowed up by the earth, or overwhelmed by the waters, or struck with fire from heaven as another Sodom, for it produced a far more impious generation than those who suffered such punishment."

This tremendous scene of carnage is very particularly described by this historian, who was, during the greater part of the time, an eye-witness of all its attendant horrors. The destruction of Jerusalem at once so remarkably displays the veracity of our Lord's predictions respecting it, the hatred of the Almighty against sin, and His distinguishing care of His people, that a brief account of it may here be properly introduced, and may not prove uninteresting.

The tyranny of the Roman governors, and especially the oppressive and vexatious conduct of Gessius Florus, occasioned in the first instance that opposition of the Jews to the Romans which ended in the final destruction of that unhappy people, who, without piety, still confided in their claim to peculiarity. Goaded by insults and severities, of which they had in vain solicited redress, this wretched people at last broke out into an open rebellion, which only tended to accelerate their ruin. At the very commencement of the insurrection, 20,000 Jews were cruelly massacred at Cæsarea; and shortly after, a sedition arising in Alexandria, 50,000 more were slain in one day by two Roman legions. In the mean time the insurrection became universal, and every place was full of blood and violence. For some time the war was conducted with apparently equal success by Jews and Romans. At length Vespasian was sent by Nero with a large body of veteran troops, who immediately marched to Gadara, took it on the first

assault, and afterwards burnt it and the adjoining villages to the ground. From thence he advanced to Jotopata, a place strongly fortified by nature and art, to which a great number of Jews had fled for security. This place also, after an obstinate resistance, fell into his hands through the treachery of one of the inhabitants; and Josephus, the famous Jewish general and historian, was taken prisoner. Vespasian now pursued his conquests with unwearied diligence, victory every where attending him. At length he determined to attack Jerusalem; but for the present was prevented by the short tumultuous reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and afterwards by his being actually compelled by his soldiers to accept of the crown.

His son Titus, being now appointed to carry on the war, made every preparation for an attack upon the capital. At this time Jerusalem was broken into factions; one party raging against another, and committing such cruelties under John, Simon, and Eleazar, the leaders of the opposite parties, as surpassed all the miseries inflicted upon them by their public enemy. At length Titus approached, and after much difficulty battered down one of the three walls by which the city was defended, and took possession of the northern quarter. At the same time he shewed great compassion to the besieged, and assured them of pardon if they would submit. But the Jews still obstinately rejecting all conditions, Titus broke through the second wall, and prepared to attack

the third. Before, however, he commenced the attack, he caused the whole city to be surrounded by a strong entrenchment, the more effectually to prevent the inhabitants from departing from the city, or receiving any relief from their friends. Thus began to be fulfilled that very explicit prophecy of our Lord, which in the subsequent overthrow of Jerusalem was so fully accomplished: "And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."*

And now is the whole vial of God's anger about to be poured out upon this devoted people. Their rejection of Messiah, their Prince, is punished by a senseless opposition to a human power too great for them to overcome, without the aid of that Prince whom they had renounced—their persecution of His faithful disciples by the most lamentable divisions, when unity was most wanted—their infidelity by a false confidence in mis-interpreted prophecies—and their contempt of that Bread which cometh down from heaven, by a terrible

* Luke xix. 41, 42, 43.

famine of that common bread, of which, as well as every temporal blessing, all must be at last deprived, who refuse to feed upon the blessed word of God. For besides the Roman army without, and the numerous factions within, the want of provisions was so great in consequence of the multitudes which had flocked to the passover, that thousands were famished, and died so fast as to render it impossible to observe the common rites of sepulture. Some, who fled from the city to Titus, related that the famine was so excessive as to compel the soldiers to eat girdles, shoes, skins, and hay. A bushel of corn was sold for six hundred crowns. Sinks and holes were continually raked to find the vilest offals to satisfy hunger. Wives took the meat out of their husbands' mouths, children from their parents', mothers from their infants'. Nay, a certain lady, descended from noble and rich parentage, actually boiled her own child, that, according to the language of ancient prophecy, she might "eat it secretly in the siege, and straitness, wherewith the enemy distressed them."*

Titus was filled with horror at the relation of this enormity. He called upon God to witness that he was not the author of these calamities, since he had repeatedly offered peace to the Jews; and concluded by declaring that he would bury this abominable crime in the ruins of their country, and not suffer the sun to shine upon a city, where

* Deut. xxviii. 53—57.

mothers ate their own children, and where fathers reduced them to that extremity by refusing to surrender.

Being now convinced that neither kind nor harsh methods could produce any effect upon this obstinate generation, Titus gave directions that all things should be made ready for a storm ; and at length finding that he could not prevail against the walls of the inner temple, he set fire to the gates, a step he had hitherto religiously avoided. The porches were soon in a flame, and continued burning all that day and the following night. Titus, however, still resolved, if possible, to save the temple ; but on the tenth day a Roman soldier, of his own accord, threw a flaming fire-brand through the golden window into the chambers, which were presently in a blaze ; and the fire, spreading through the whole fabric, consumed the most glorious structure that the world ever saw. Titus in the mean time employed every effort to extinguish the flames. He called, entreated, and even threatened, his men ; but without effect. So great was the confusion, and so pertinaciously were the soldiers bent upon destroying all within their reach, that he was neither heard nor regarded.

Throughout the whole history of the human race we meet with few, if any, instances of carnage and devastation that can be compared with this. According to their own historian, in the course of a seven years' war there perished of this ill-fated people, in one way or another, no less a

number than one million three hundred and thirty-seven thousand four hundred and ninety.

Amongst the various observations, which this horrible, yet instructive history may suggest, it is worthy of remark, that the Jews, by their obdurate wickedness, and insensibility to the patience and mercy of God, brought upon themselves the punishment due to them. They had put to death the Lord of life, and thereby had forfeited their own; and now, behold! not only by a judicial, but by a kind of necessary result, they are found to be their own murderers. Thus died the Jewish people; nor will they rise again till they own *Him* to be risen, whom they crucified and slew; till they “look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him, as one that mourneth for his only son.”*

Whilst, however, the Jewish nation in general experienced this dreadful destruction, the Christians, with their venerable bishop, Simeon, were wonderfully preserved. The account of their escape has been hitherto omitted, that the thread of the preceding narrative might not be broken. We may now, therefore, briefly notice it.

Almost at the commencement of the war, Cestius Gallus broke into the lower part of the city, and used such measures, as, humanly speaking, would have ensured his taking the upper part and the temple, had he continued his attack. But at this

* Zech. xii. 10.

moment he unexpectedly, and without any assignable cause on his part, raised the siege. The Christians took advantage of this circumstance. Recollecting that our Lord had warned them to leave Jerusalem when they should see it encompassed with armies, and to flee when they should behold the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, they embraced the opportunity, and universally retreated to Pella; so that none of them perished in the common desolation. The place of their retreat was a little town beyond Jordan, about one hundred miles from Jerusalem, belonging to Agrippa, and inhabited by Gentiles.

How long Simeon and his flock continued in this sanctuary, and when they returned to Jerusalem, is unknown, though it is generally supposed that they came back about the beginning of the reign of Trajan. It is certain that they returned before the time of Adrian; for upon that emperor's coming to Jerusalem, forty years after its destruction, he found there a few houses and a little church upon Mount Sion.

In the mean time Simeon discharged the important duties of his office with great diligence and fidelity. At length, in the middle of Trajan's reign, he was charged with being a Christian, and a descendant of the kings of Judah. In consequence of this accusation he was sentenced by the proconsul to be first put to the rack and severely scourged, and afterwards to be crucified. The

venerable bishop endured his severe sufferings with such composure of mind and invincible patience as astonished the proconsul and all that were present. But neither his age nor resignation could induce them to reprieve or mitigate his sentence, for he still persisted in pleading guilty to what was considered the most offensive of all crimes, his being a Christian.

Simeon suffered martyrdom in the tenth year of the reign of Trajan, in the hundred and twentieth year of his own age, and in the hundred and seventh of the Christian æra.

It is not a little remarkable, that during the dreadful persecutions which made such havoc in the Church, most of the eminent Christian teachers, of whom we have any account, lived to a very advanced age. Simeon, as has been said, was a hundred and twenty years old, Ignatius eighty, Polycarp considerably older, Tertullian ninety, and Justin, Irenæus, Origen, and Cyprian, were also all far advanced in years at the time of their deaths. Doubtless we may attribute their preservation for so long a time, as well from the fatal effects of disease and decay of nature, as from the fury of the persecutor's sword, to a special Providence, cherishing and prolonging their lives for their work's sake. Still, however, as God generally accomplishes His benevolent purposes by natural means, we may reasonably suppose that their very religion, by inculcating on its possessors the greatest temperance and sobriety, so conducive to health,

was under the Divine blessing one especial cause of their longevity.

“ I have often thought,” remarks a learned writer, “ that there is much more of sickness and pain in the world (as well as other natural evils) than is essentially consequent on even the present fallen state of human nature. Many, through excess of action and passion, sap the foundation of their constitution, and either exist as useless members of society, or die before their time ; while others, perhaps in less favourable circumstances, make the best of life by being temperate in all things, having the peace of God to rule their hearts, and regularity and order to guide all the actions of life. Such persons, especially if born with good constitutions, may be long healthy and vigorous, be rather gradually and imperceptibly worn out with continued action than pulled down by disease, and thus have the privilege, for which every good man may piously wish, to lay down his body with his charge, and cease at once to work and live.” *

* Dr. A. Clarke.

CLEMENT,

BISHOP OF ROME.

CHAPTER I.

The early part of Clement's life uncertain.—His conversion to Christianity.—Nero persecutes the Christians.—The martyrdoms of the Apostles Paul and Peter.

THE history of Christianity, unlike most other histories, is clearest at its commencement. In the New Testament we have a particular account of its first promulgation and success, and of the characters and introductory labours of the principal apostles ; but no sooner is the Sacred Canon closed than we pass from the blaze of meridian day into the regions of gloom and uncertainty. We find indeed that the Gospel rapidly spread ; but of the means and manner of its diffusion we have no satisfactory information. We see enough to be convinced that many of the early ministers of Christ steadily traced the footsteps of the great apostles, and were little inferior in zeal, labours, and piety, to their inspired predecessors ; but we

look in vain for an accurate delineation of their characters, or an authentic narrative of their proceedings.

Little more is known with certainty of the subject of this narrative, than that he was for several years bishop of Rome, and author of an epistle to the Corinthians, which is still extant. Some persons indeed have not scrupled to assert, that he was descended from the family of the Cæsars; a mistake which probably originated from confounding him with Flavius Clemens, the consul, a near relation of the emperor Domitian, who put him to death for refusing to sacrifice to the Pagan gods. The character of Clement, however, as a Christian bishop, whether his ancestors were royal princes, or obscure mechanics, will not be less valued by those who know how properly to appreciate real excellence. As princely descent cannot dignify ignorance and vice; so a humble origin cannot degrade learning and piety. If a heathen could say, that virtue is the only nobility, we may surely add, that it is better to be good than great; and infinitely more honourable to be born of God than to be able to trace our pedigree to a nobleman or a monarch.

Clement is supposed to have been a native of Rome, though the time of his birth is not ascertained. His father's name was Faustinus. Several particulars relative to his early life are given by Dr. Cave on very doubtful authority. But the following circumstances, connected with his con-

version, appear worthy of notice. When he had arrived at man's estate, he was perplexed respecting the immortality of the soul and a future state ; and endeavoured, without success, to obtain a satisfactory solution of his doubts at the schools of the philosophers. He then thought of consulting some Egyptian magicians, supposing, that if souls existed in a separate state, they would be able to recal one from the invisible world to satisfy his curiosity. Whilst he was in this state, he heard that the Son of God had lately appeared on earth, and delivered the most excellent and important doctrines to His disciples. The intelligence deeply interested him ; and the apostle Barnabas being at that time in Rome, he applied to him for information, and learnt from that " son of consolation" the first elements of Christianity. He afterwards met with the apostle Peter, by whom he was farther instructed in the things of God ; and at length was joined to the congregation of believers, by the sacred ordinance of baptism. For many years after this he appears to have been highly respected by the great apostles, Peter and Pául, and frequently to have attended each of them on their journeys among the heathen.

In the year 62, Saint Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, having spoken of Clement as his fellow-labourer, observes that his " name is in the book of life." How honourable is this testimony concerning him ! And at the same time how consolatory is the reflection, that it is not more appli-

cable to Clement than to every humble follower of our Lord Jesus Christ !

Hitherto the Christians, though almost always despised, and frequently insulted with impunity, had never been subjected to any legal persecution. But the time was now at hand when an imperial tyrant, after having long glutted himself with the blood of his Pagan subjects, was about to spread devastation in the Church of God.

Foremost in the rank of persecuting emperors, whom the Church will ever regard with horror, stands the cruel Nero, whose conduct to the Christians admits of no palliation, but was to the last degree unprincipled and inhuman. He commenced his ravages against the defenceless Church of Christ about the middle of November, 64. It appears from Tacitus that he brought no accusation against the Christians on the ground of their religion, but imputed to them the perpetration of a flagitious act, of which he himself was the author. This merciless tyrant, having for his mere amusement caused several houses to be set on fire, kindled a flame in his capital, by which a great part of it was destroyed. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, it has been justly remarked, is one of the most dreadful spectacles in the world. How perverted then must have been the feelings of the emperor, who is reported to have expressed great pleasure at the spectacle, and from an elevated spot to have

amused himself, amidst the surrounding flames, with singing the burning of Troy.

Hardened, however, as Nero was in vice, an exasperated public made him anxious to avert from himself the infamy of being reckoned the author of this calamity. But these attempts he found to be in vain. At length, in order, if possible, to divert the tide of popular indignation from its proper channel, he charged the crime upon the innocent Christians, and displayed the utmost eagerness in directing against them all the vengeance of the state; putting them to death without mercy, and even making a jest of their torments. The above mentioned historian gives the following account of this event, which points out at the same time the severity of the persecution, and the enmity of the Roman people to the followers of Christ.

“ Neither the emperor’s donations, nor the sacrifices he offered to the gods, could avert from him the infamy of being the author of the conflagration. Hence, to suppress the rumour, he charged the crime, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures, on a people detestable for their wickedness, who were commonly known by the name of Christians. This sect derived its name and origin from Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius was put to death by the sentence of Pontius Pilate the procurator. For a time this destructive superstition was suppressed; but afterwards broke out

afresh; and not only spread through Judea, the source of the evil, but introduced itself into our metropolis, the common sewer in which every thing filthy and flagitious meets and flourishes. Some individuals, who confessed themselves Christians, were at first apprehended, and a great multitude afterwards upon their evidence shared the same fate. These were all condemned, not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of mankind.* Their tortures were embittered with insult and derision. Some were inclosed in skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs; others were nailed on crosses; and others, covered with combustible materials, were lighted as torches at the close of the day. This spectacle, accompanied with the games of the circus, was exhibited in the emperor's gardens. Nero himself was not merely present; but, clad in the dress of a

* "A very remarkable accusation," observes Mr. Milner. "It may be explained as follows:—True Christians, though the genuine friends of all their fellow-creatures, cannot allow men, who are not true Christians, to be in the favour of God. Their very earnestness, in calling on their neighbours to repent, and believe the Gospel, proves to those neighbours in what a dangerous state they are then apprehended to be. All, who are not moved by the admonitions of Christian charity to flee from the wrath to come, will naturally be disgusted; and thus the purest benevolence will be construed into the most merciless bigotry. Thus Christians incurred the general hatred, to which the conduct neither of Jews nor heretics rendered them obnoxious. And the same cause produces similar effects to this day."—Milner's Church History.

charioteer, sometimes mixed with the populace, and occasionally contended in the race. Hence a degree of commiseration was at length excited in behalf of the Christians, though criminal, and deserving the most exemplary punishment, because they were sacrificed not so much to the public good as to the cruelty of an individual."

Who can read this account without being deeply affected with the miserable and destitute situation of the oppressed Christians. If an author, so celebrated for accuracy as Tacitus, could manifest such hatred and ignorance of the persons of whom he was writing, how inveterate must have been the prejudices of the generality of the people against them. We have indeed repeated instances of the most dreadful sufferings of the Christians being but too congenial to the feelings of the savage Romans, and of the readiness of their magistrates to indulge them with the exhibition of such horrid orgies. Under these circumstances it is not a little remarkable, that some writers have supposed that the persecution was confined within the walls of Rome; for surely it can never be conceived that the emperor would rage against the Christians in the capital, and suffer them to remain unmolested every where else. It is besides evident, from a passage in Tertullian's Apology, that Nero promulgated edicts against the Christians; and if this be allowed, not a question can remain of their having been carried into effect throughout all the provinces.

How Clement escaped this dreadful persecution

we are not informed. If he was in Rome at the time when it commenced, it is probable that he provided for his safety by immediate flight, or so carefully secreted himself in the city, as to elude the vigilance of his cruel enemies; for in times of persecution the ministers of the different churches were naturally the first objects of the popular fury.

But though Clement avoided the fury of the present storm, it was otherwise with his great apostolical friends, Paul and Peter, who now closed their long, laborious, and eminently useful lives by honourable martyrdom.

The inspired writer of the Acts of the Apostles, having given a full and particular account of the conversion, labours, and success, of the great apostle of the Gentiles, closes his interesting history with the narrative of his first imprisonment in Rome. During his confinement there, which continued for two whole years, he was enabled to declare before the tyrant, whose cruelties we have just related, the glad tidings of salvation. The message, though delivered without effect to the emperor, appears to have been blessed to several of his household.*

Through the over-ruling Providence of God, the Apostle was at this time “delivered from the mouth of the lion,” and permitted once more to visit the churches he had planted. At length, after

* Chrysostom mentions a cupbearer, and a concubine of Nero, who were converted by St. Paul.

a ministry of more than thirty years, he was again sent a prisoner to Rome—again declared his readiness to be offered up—and shortly after was beheaded by the command of Nero.

It would be scarcely proper to refer to the end of this great apostle, without staying to contemplate the brightness of his example, and the extent of his usefulness. Separated from the womb, and called by miraculous means both to the knowledge and service of the Gospel, he considered himself under the highest obligations to a forgiving and gracious Saviour. He had before been zealous for the law; and he now properly understood the nature of it, and its agreement with the Gospel. He saw consistency and beauty, mercy and severity, holiness and love—love to sinners—beaming from them both. The scales having fallen from his eyes, he was filled with shame and self-reproach for persecuting the followers of his crucified Lord; and began, “to preach the faith which he had destroyed,” with an ardour and courage greater than that which he had manifested in opposition to it. His success also was proportionate to his exertions. When we take into the account the immense multitudes converted under his own ministry, the benefit derived from his Epistles, not merely by the persons to whom they were addressed, but by others in subsequent ages, and the blessings they will convey to thousands yet unborn, what reason is there to praise God for raising up an instrument for producing such great good.

Doubtless he is again taken up into the third heaven, to descend no more ; where he sees and hears, with the organs of a seraph, those unutterable things nowhere else to be seen and heard ; where he is a partaker of those unsearchable riches for which he counted all the wealth of this world as dross ; where he is an inheritor of that inheritance among the saints in light, of which he had here only the earnest ; and where he is a ravished beholder, face to face, of that God and Saviour, for whom he was always longing to be dissolved, but for whom he was willing to wait and work till the hour of his departure should arrive.

Much less is mentioned in the Scriptures of Peter than of the preceding apostle ; but enough to rank him next after him in the noble army of Christian martyrs. He appears to have been employed during the greater part of his ministry in preaching the Gospel principally, though not exclusively, to the Jews, throughout Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia. It is probable, from ancient records, that he resided during the two last years of his life at Rome, and that he wrote from thence his second Epistle a very short time previous to his martyrdom. Papias, indeed, the disciple of Polycarp, and bishop of Hierapolis, says, that he also wrote his first Epistle from Rome, and that he spoke figuratively of that city, when he said, “ The Church that is at *Babylon*, elected together with you, saluteth you.” According to Ambrose, he was preparing, in compliance

with the earnest entreaties of his Christian brethren, to leave the city during Nero's bloody persecution ; but on his arrival at the gate our Lord appeared to him, and said, " I am coming hither to be crucified again." The apostle understanding that He meant He was about to suffer again in one of His members, immediately returned to his friends, and was shortly after apprehended and crucified. The mention which St. Peter makes of his being shewn by our Lord, that " he must shortly put off this tabernacle," in connection with the solemn prediction before delivered to him respecting the death whereby he should glorify God,* gives an air of probability to this account, and affords some ground for the credulity of after ages in receiving a story of this kind.

The ministry of this zealous apostle, though less exercised amongst the Gentiles than that of St. Paul, was nevertheless attended with an astonishing blessing among the Jews. Indeed, considering the judicial blindness of that people, continued even to this very day, the effects of the apostle's preaching were most wonderful. We may almost venture to say, that the whole remnant which God had reserved to Himself from that people, until the time that " all Israel shall be saved," was comprised in the converts which he made out of that generation.

* John xxi. 18, 19. 2 Pet. i. 14.

The animating and spiritual epistles of this apostle, though intended especially for the people to whom they were addressed, will never cease to interest the Christian reader. Is he cold? they will warm him. Is he desponding? they will comfort him. In short, while the Church continues, they will be read with undiminished interest, and be the means of conveying the most solid comfort and important instruction. Clement informs us that Peter witnessed his wife's martyrdom a short time before his own. His last words to her were, "Remember the Lord."

These two eminent apostles suffered at the same time, in the year 66. Paul, as we have mentioned, was beheaded: being favoured with this comparatively easy death, on account of his being a Roman citizen. Peter was crucified, with his head downwards: his great humility leading him to request that he might die in this posture, not thinking himself worthy to suffer in the same manner as his blessed Lord.

The following exhortation from the Epistle of Clement to a patient perseverance in well doing, from the examples of these eminent apostles, will suitably close this brief sketch of their characters, and again introduce to the reader the more immediate subject of this memoir. Having lamented that many in the Church at Corinth, seduced by a spirit of pride and envy, had forsaken the ways and ordinances of God, he adds, "Not to insist upon

ancient examples, let us come down to the worthies of our own age, those most faithful and righteous pillars of the Church, who were persecuted even to the most grievous deaths. Let us set before our eyes the holy apostles. Through the unjust hatred of the world, Peter sustained various trials, until at length, having suffered martyrdom, he was received into the glorious mansion prepared for him. Paul also, having, in consequence of the same hatred of the world, been seven times imprisoned, beaten with rods, and stoned, was at last crowned with the reward of his patience. The faith and labours of this illustrious herald of Christ are celebrated from the eastern to the western hemisphere. Having instructed the whole world in righteousness, having travelled to the utmost boundary of the west,* and exhibited a most eminent example of patience under suffering, he was put to death by the command of the governors, and thus departed from this lower world to the sanctuary of God. By the lives and labours of these apostles a great multitude of the elect were gathered together, who suffered various cruel torments from the same enmity of the world, and endured them with the same exemplary pa-

* *Επὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δυσσεως.* By this expression some writers suppose that Great Britain is intended, and hence are of opinion that the apostle Paul preached the Gospel in our native land.

tience. On a like account also females have experienced most dreadful and unjust persecutions, have been enabled steadily to pursue their Christian course ; and, notwithstanding the weakness of their sex, have received a glorious reward."

CHAPTER II.

Clement is appointed sole bishop of the Jewish and Gentile Christians at Rome.—Domitian's persecution.—Remarks on the writings of the primitive fathers.—Clement's epistle to the Philippians.—His banishment to the mines.—His martyrdom.

THE dreadful persecution of Nero continued nearly four years ; during which period the Christians were exposed to every species of insult and outrage. At length the Roman senate solemnly branded that tyrant with the character so ill applied to the Christians, but so deservedly to him ; and condemned him to be scourged to death, as *an enemy of the human race*. To avoid the execution of the sentence, Nero, with much reluctance, put a period to his present existence, and was hurried with all his crimes upon his head to abide the sentence of that Judge who has said He will avenge the cause of His own elect. But our judgment ceases with his death ; nor is it for us to adjudge even a Nero to final condemnation.

The Romans were too much occupied by their own quarrels during the short turbulent reigns of the following emperors, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, to pay much attention to the despised Christians. Indeed we have no particular accounts of their

sufferings till the reign of Domitian, though it is not probable that the fire of persecution was ever completely extinguished during any part of that period.

As soon as there was an interval of peace, we may suppose, that Clement resumed his situation in Rome. It is also probable, from the testimonies of various writers, that he was appointed by Peter, a short time before his martyrdom, to preside over the Jewish Christian Church in that city, St. Paul having about the same time nominated Linus to the like office over the Gentile Church; the prejudices between Jews and Gentiles being still so inveterate as to make it inexpedient to unite them together in the same community. Linus, having presided over the Gentile converts upwards of twelve years, was succeeded by Anacletus, who held the situation about the same time, and was then removed by death.

Time, and a more clear understanding of the nature of Christianity, had now apparently removed the unhappy jealousy which had too long subsisted between the Jewish and Gentile Christians: to which reconciliation we may add, that the ruin of Jerusalem, and the extinction of the temple-worship, together with the downfall of the temple itself, had not a little contributed. And as Clement's long residence at Rome, and faithful discharge for five and twenty years of the duties of his episcopal office, had rendered him an object of general respect to both parties, the cordiality united under

the presidency of “ a man who,” to use the language of Irenæus, “ had seen the blessed apostles, and conversed with them, and had their preaching still sounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes.”*

Ecclesiastical records give us little information respecting the manner in which Clement acted in his bishopric ; though we may rest assured, from the testimony of many ancient authors, as well as from certain evident indications in his own writings, that his piety was most eminent, and his conduct in the highest degree exemplary. Interesting and profitable indeed would have been the perusal of an authenticated account of his character—to have read the various regulations he made for the introduction of Christianity where it was unknown, and the increase and establishment of it where it already existed. But, alas ! whilst the minutest details have been given, with the greatest precision and elegance, of persons, whose names deserved to be forgotten, or remembered merely to be abhorred, little is known of the lives of “ men of whom the world was not worthy,” and who, under the Divine blessing, were the instrument of everlasting salvation to thousands of their fellow-creatures. All that is related respecting Clement is, that he appointed notaries to enquire after, and faithfully record, all the acts of the martyrs that suffered within his district, and that

* A. D. 91.

he deputed missionaries to propagate Christianity in those parts of the world, where the sound of the Gospel had not hitherto been heard.

In the year 95, the emperor Domitian, who had not hitherto persecuted the Christians, began to oppress them. His motives in the first instance seem to have had in them more of policy than of hatred ; but there were not wanting those who, with the enmity of Satan, sought an occasion to “ murder the innocent.” Persons of this description suggested to the emperor that the Jews and Christians were in daily expectation of one descended from the family of David, who would establish a powerful and extensive dominion ; and that they were both merely waiting for an opportunity for breaking out into an open revolt. Invidious whispers of this kind prompted the jealous tyrant to order the posterity of David to be sought for, and put to death, and effectual means to be taken to oppose the pretended conspiracy.

Domitian at length hearing that there were living in Palestine certain relations of that Judas who was called the brother of Christ, descendants of the royal house of David, commanded them to be brought to Rome, and closely examined as to their origin, the extent of their property, and the nature of their expectations in regard to the future reign of Christ. These good men, without hesitation, acknowledged to the emperor, that they had sprung from the stock of David ; but, at the same time, made it appear to him, that their condition in

life was too humble, and their circumstances too low to awaken his fears. Moreover their general appearance, and the very hardness of their hands, which they then shewed him, confirmed their report. Being interrogated respecting Christ and His kingdom, they replied, that His kingdom was not of this world, but of heaven ; and that it would not commence until the end of all things here below.

“ Poverty,” remarks Mr. Milner, “ is sometimes a defence against oppression, though it never shields from contempt. Domitian was satisfied that his throne was in no danger from Christian ambition : and the grandsons of Jude were dismissed with the same sort of derision with which their Saviour had formerly been dismissed by Herod. Thus had the Son of God provided for His indigent relations : they were poor in circumstances, but rich in faith, and heirs of His heavenly kingdom.”

The principal persons who are reported to have suffered during this persecution were Flavius Clemens, a consul, and his wife, Flavia Domitilla. The husband is stated to have been put to death, and the wife to have been banished to the island of Pandataria. They were both of them nearly related to the emperor. It was also during this season of calamity to the Church that St. John, the apostle, was banished to the island of Patmos.

This persecution ceased in the year 96, when the emperor Domitian was assassinated. He was

succeeded by Nerva, who recalled those that were banished, and suspended the bloody edicts of his predecessor.

By what means Clement weathered this storm we are not told, only we may be sure he would not prostitute his Christian integrity by any unworthy concessions. His epistle to the Corinthians, to which we have already had occasion to refer, is supposed to have been written shortly after the accession of Nerva to the throne. By those, who can be charmed with sanctity of sentiment and the effusions of genuine piety, unadorned by the brilliancy of genius, or the refinements of human learning, this work will be perused with considerable interest. "It has," as Mr. Milner remarks, "a simplicity and a plainness not easily relished by a systematic modern; but there belongs to it also a wonderful depth of holiness and wisdom." The primitive Christians, indeed, seem to have had neither opportunity nor inclination to polish their compositions. But whether more or less excellence belonged to them as writers, the sincerity in which they walked, the zeal which they displayed in diffusing the knowledge of truth, and their willingness to die in defence of it, were eminently their attainments. The situation also of most of the primitive Christians, the scantiness of their means for improvement in human knowledge and science, and their constant exposure to sufferings, make it more surprising that their works are so well written than that they are not better. If they

abound not, however, in the graces of diction, that want is compensated by the vein of fervent piety, the native dignity of Divine truth, and occasionally the flow of untutored eloquence which they display.

Clement's epistle appears to have been composed in answer to one written by the Corinthian Church, which was at that time much in the same state, as when the apostle wrote to them. It contained many very pious members, but was harassed by various religious contentions, and in danger of having a sound and exemplary presbytery, superseded by a self-conceited and turbulent set of heretical teachers.

Clement commences his epistle in a manner not dissimilar to that of the apostle, by addressing himself "to the called and sanctified," though at the same time he arrogates to himself no dignity, but speaks merely as the representative of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth.* Referring to

* The following excellent remarks, in reference to the supremacy assumed in later ages by the pontiffs of the Romish Church over the rest of the Christian world, will appear strictly appropriate to every pious Reader, who is acquainted with St. Clement's epistle:—

"If the claims of authority be well grounded, they will, of course, be highest when nearest to their source: yet upon this supposition how unaccountable is the conduct of Clemens and the Church of Rome. We have here the first instance upon record in which that Church thought proper to interpose in the religious concerns of its brethren. It might, therefore, have been expected, that the bishop of Rome should have begun with

the unhappy divisions which prevailed amongst them, he remarks, "The apostles preached to us from our Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ from God. Christ, therefore, was sent by God; the apostles by Christ. Both missions were in order, according to the will of God. Having, therefore, received their commission, being thoroughly assured of the resurrection of our Lord, and believing in the Word of God, with the fulness of the Holy Spirit, they went abroad, declaring that the kingdom of God was at hand. Thus they travelled through different countries and cities, and appointed the first-fruits of their ministry, after they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons over those who should afterwards believe.

asserting his own sovereign authority over the Corinthian and all other Churches; should have required implicit obedience to his mandates; and, in case of non-compliance, denounced the rebellious assembly cut off from the body of the faithful: yet, as if it were intended by Providence, that the first known interposition of a Roman pontiff in the affairs of another Church should remain as a lesson of humility, or a reproof of arrogance to his successors, the evangelical author of this epistle seems purposely to extenuate his authority even over his own people; merges even his own name in that of his Church; and though he reproves the misconduct of the Corinthians with freedom, and even with dignity, yet it is only with the freedom of a benevolent equal, and the dignity of a grieved friend. But above all, humility and patience are conspicuous: no 'holy rage,' no zeal calling for judgments, no asperity of reproach; but prayers and intreaties, or, at most, expostulations and arguments, constituted, at that time, the spiritual weapons of the Roman Church."—Christian Observer, Vol. II. page 2.

“ The apostles themselves were informed by our Lord Jesus Christ, that contentions would arise concerning the ministry. On this account, therefore, they not only themselves ordained ministers, as we have before mentioned ; but also gave directions that on their decease, other chosen and approved men should succeed them.* We cannot, therefore, but think it unjust to eject such persons from the ministry as were ordained (with the approbation of the whole church) either by the apostles or holy men succeeding them ; who have ministered to the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested manner, and for a series of years have been well reported of by all. For surely it is a sin of no small magnitude to dismiss from that office such blameless and holy pastors ! Happy are those presbyters, who have already finished their course, and died in the fruitful discharge of their labours ; they have now no reason to fear that any one should remove them from the place appointed for them. But, alas ! we learn that you have ejected some excellent ministers, whose blameless lives were an ornament to

* “ It is impossible,” remarks the Christian Observer, “ calmly to weigh the arguments incidentally introduced by St. Clement, in this place, without acknowledging that it furnishes good ground for considering the three orders of ministers which exist in our Church, as agreeable to the institution of Christ. The apostles and their successors, to whom the name of *ἐπισκοποι* was afterwards appropriated, correspond to our bishops ; the elders, or presbyters, to our priests ; and the ministers to our deacons.”—Vol. I. pp. 572, 713, 762.

their profession. Ye are contentious, brethren, and zealous for things which belong not to salvation. Search the Scriptures, the faithful records of the Holy Spirit. There you find that good men were persecuted indeed, but by the wicked ; were imprisoned, but by the unholy ; were stoned, but by transgressors ; were murdered, but by the profane, and by such as were unjustly incensed against them. Let us, therefore, unite ourselves to the innocent and righteous, for they are God's elect.

“ Why are there strifes, angers, divisions, schisms, and contentions, among you ? Have you not all one God, and one Christ ? Is not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us all, and one calling of Christ bestowed upon us all ? Why then do we rend and tear the members of Christ, and excite seditions in our own body ? Your schism has perverted many, has discouraged many, has staggered many. It has caused grief to us all ; and, alas ! it continues still.”

As the nature of this epistle is practical, no very regular or precise statement of doctrine is to be expected. Still, however, the essential doctrines of revelation are clearly exhibited. He thus, for instance, plainly states his sentiments respecting redemption by the atonement of Christ. “ Let us look steadily at the blood of Christ, and see how precious His blood is in the sight of God ; for on account of its being shed for our salvation, the grace of repentance is provided for all mankind.”

In the following passage we have the infinite condescension of Christ stated as a ground for enforcing Christian humility. “ Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sceptre of the majesty of God, came not in the pomp of pride and ostentation, though he could have done so, but in humility. You see, brethren, the example He afforded us. If the Lord thus humbled Himself, how should we too demean ourselves, who are brought by Him under the yoke of His grace.”

In the annexed quotation, wherein he is speaking of the Old Testament fathers, he clearly states the all-important doctrine of justification by grace through faith, and at the same time repels the yet common objection of its licentious tendency. “ All these were magnified and honoured, not through themselves, not through their own works, not through the righteous deeds which they performed, but through God’s will. And we, also by His will, being called in Christ Jesus, are justified, not by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or by the works which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by faith ; by which Almighty God hath justified all, who are, or have been, justified from the beginning ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. But what then ? Shall we neglect good works ? Does it hence follow, that we should leave the law of loving obedience ? God forbid ; let us rather hasten with all earnestness of mind to every good work ; for the Lord Himself rejoices in His works. Having

such an example, let us strenuously follow His will, and work the works of righteousness with all our might."

Referring to the exalted privileges and graces of the real believer, he breaks forth into a kind of transport, whilst at the same time he strongly inculcates the importance of cultivating personal holiness. "How blessed, how amazing, my beloved, are the gifts of God! Life in immortality! splendour in righteousness! truth in liberty! faith in assurance! sobriety in holiness! And thus far, even in this life, we know by experience. What, therefore, must those things be which Christ has prepared for those that wait for Him? The Holy Creator and Father of the universe alone knows their greatness and excellency. Let us, therefore, earnestly seek to be found amongst that number who wait for Him, that we may obtain the reward which He has promised. And how, beloved, shall we attain these rewards? By establishing our hearts in faith towards God, and by seeking to do His will in all things with truth and earnestness. Thus, beloved, shall we find our salvation, even Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our offerings, and helper of our weakness."

In another place having illustrated the doctrine of the resurrection by the succession of day and night, and the dissolution and growth of seeds, he proceeds, somewhat unhappily, to enforce it by the account of the Arabian phoenix, a story, which,

though now justly exploded, appears to have been at that time generally credited.*

Eusebius, speaking of this epistle, remarks, that Clement had inserted in it many sentiments of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and also used some of the very expressions. Certainly in many parts there is an evident resemblance; but whether Clement be supposed to quote from that epistle, or only to say the same things as it were by unconscious coincidence, we cannot but be pleased to observe an infusion of the language, spirit, and matter, of the Sacred Scriptures in the writings of this and the other fathers, which have thus travelled down from the times of the apostles, through every intervening age, to the present day. For this transmission of the words of Holy Writ affords a considerable proof, and one which has been justly urged in support of its authenticity; and a similar transmission of the *sense* of any doctrine of Scripture, which is agreeable to that which the church generally receives in

* The fable of the phoenix was as follows: A certain bird called a phoenix, of which there was only one living at a time, was said, after a period of five hundred years, to make itself a nest of the spices of Arabia, into which it entered immediately before its death. A worm bred from the ashes of the dead bird, gradually became a new phoenix; and, having arrived at maturity, carried the nest, with the remains of its parent, to a city called Heliopolis, in Egypt, where it deposited them on the altar of the sun. The priests then searched their records, and found that exactly five hundred years had elapsed since a former phoenix had acted in the same manner.

our own times, affords a presumptive proof that this is the real and true interpretation, grounded at once on the antiquity and universality of its acceptance.

The preceding remark of Eusebius is accompanied by the following conjecture respecting the epistle to the Hebrews. “ Paul having written to the Hebrews in their own tongue, some think the evangelist Luke, others that this very Clement, translated it [into Greek], which last is the most probable on account of the resemblance between the style of the epistle of Clement, and that to the Hebrews.” But this opinion seems to rest on insufficient foundation, because the greater number of the ancient fathers have considered the epistle as first written in Greek.*

Hitherto Clement had been wonderfully preserved during several dreadful persecutions; but

* The present learned bishop of Lincoln informs us, that Clement, of Alexandria, and Jerome, as well as Eusebius, thought the epistle to have been written originally in Hebrew; but “ all the other ancient fathers, who have mentioned the subject, speak of the Greek as the original work; and as no one pretends to have seen this epistle in Hebrew, we may accede to this opinion. It is no small satisfaction,” the bishop adds, “ to reflect, that those who have denied the genuineness or the originality of this epistle have always supposed it to have been written or translated by some fellow-labourer, or assistant, of St. Paul, and that almost every one admits that it carries with it the sanction and authority of the inspired apostle.”—Tomline's *Elements of Christianity*.

the time was now at hand, when it was "given to him in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." It is not improbable, that he had a presentiment of his impending sufferings; for in his epistle to the Corinthians, after referring to the persecutions endured by the apostles, he adds, that he looked upon himself and his people as appointed to run in the same lists, and engage in the same conflict.

The following is an abstract of the occasion and circumstances of the martyrdom of this eminent father, as related by Cave, from the account of Simeon Metaphrastes. It is, however, proper to inform the reader, that the authenticity of the whole account has been questioned. Several individuals of high rank and character having been converted by Clement to the Christian faith, the jealousy and ill will of the pagans was at length excited against him. At the instance of one Torcutianus, a man of considerable influence in the city, he was accused of using magical arts; and, upon his resolute refusal to sacrifice to the heathen gods, he was banished by the emperor Trajan, and condemned to labour in some distant mines.

This mode of punishment, not uncommon amongst the Romans, was considered in severity next to a capital one. The condemned person was treated with the greatest inhumanity. He was deprived of his estate, scourged, and fettered,

and reduced to a state of abject slavery. And in after-times the sufferings of the miserable captive were increased by additions at once contemptuous and cruel. His head was half shaved, his forehead branded with a hot iron, his right eye bored out, and his left leg disabled.

On Clement's arriving at the place of his exile, he found great numbers of Christians condemned to the same lamentable fate. His presence, however, darted a cheering ray through the gloomy caves that surrounded them, whilst his labours, through the Divine blessing, were not only made useful in comforting his captive brethren, but also the means of converting numbers of the neighbouring inhabitants to the Christian faith.

How interesting it is to behold this venerable saint, thus steadily persevering in his labour of love, under the pressure of those sufferings, to which he was condemned by his enemies. Although now far advanced in years, an exile, and a captive, his heart is filled with gratitude, and his mouth with praises; only anxious that whilst life and breath remain he may be made the happy instrument of pouring the balm of consolation into the wounded spirits of his fellow-prisoners, and of leading all around him, whether friends or foes, to a participation of the same Gospel privileges with himself. Admirable is the wisdom that characterises his epistle; exemplary the deportment wherewith he adorns his episcopal office; but his con-

duct, while a prisoner in the mines, surpasses in glory !

The wonderful effects which attended the labours of this eminent man having at length reached the ears of the emperor, he ordered the president to stop the increase of Christianity, by putting several of the brethren to death. Finding, however, that the executions of one day served but as examples to encourage others to suffer in the same cause the next, he resolved, if possible, to strike terror into the rising sect, by singling out the most eminent teachers among them as the monuments of his displeasure. For this purpose Clement was selected ; and, after promises and threatenings had been employed in vain to cause him to retract, he was cast into the sea with a heavy weight affixed to his body.

Thus was the temporal existence of this eminent apostolical father, after a long course of active and extensive usefulness, at length terminated by a watery grave, about the commencement of the second century.

“ So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky ;
So Lycidas sunk low ; but mounted high,
Through the dear night of him that walk'd the waves ;
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,

And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
 There entertain him all the saints above,
 In solemn troops and sweet societies,
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."

EXPLANATION

IGNATIUS.

CHAPTER I.

Ignatius is educated by the Apostles.—Is appointed bishop of Antioch.—His attention to his flock.—His character.

SCIENCE, considered in itself, is highly desirable ; and great attainments in literature, when consecrated to the service of God, qualify their possessor for greater usefulness. Such acquirements, however, are not essential to religion. It can exist—it can flourish without them. Witness the many pious persons in all ages, who, whilst, in a high degree, “taught of God,” have been but little acquainted with human learning ! Witness also the generality of ministers in the two first centuries, who, from peculiar circumstances, were unable to make any considerable proficiency in literature, yet preached the Gospel in its native purity, and were made eminently instrumental in the conversion of souls. Plain unlettered men of God ! They could tell, in an artless and affecting manner, the story of

Him who bought us with His inestimable blood : with a holy earnestness they could invite poor perishing sinners to flee to Him for succour ; and manifest daily a readiness to go to prison and to death for the name of the Lord Jesus !

IGNATIUS, surnamed THEOPHORUS,* the celebrated bishop of Antioch, appears to have been a pastor of this description. He was born about the year of our Lord 28 ; but nothing can now be accurately ascertained respecting the place of his nativity or his parentage, though some have not scrupled to assign the former honour to Nora, a city in Sardinia. There is also a current report, but not well authenticated, that he was that very child, whom our Lord set before the disciples, when He told them that “ except they were converted, and became as little children, they should not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”† It is, however, certain that at a very early age he was acquainted with the apostles. Chrysostom informs us, that “ he was educated by them, always with them, and admitted not merely to their familiar discourses, but to their most private conferences.” We learn also, from the account of his martyrdom, which was written by some who were eye-witnesses of that solemn scene, that he

* THEOPHORUS, one who carries God in his breast ;—a name probably given to Ignatius, on account of his soul being filled with the love of God, and sanctified with an extraordinary portion of Divine grace.

† Matt. xviii. 3.

and Polycarp were fellow-disciples of the apostle John.

Having spent many years in this holy society, and given evident marks of exalted piety, Ignatius was placed by the apostle Paul over the Gentile Church at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria. This city, illustrious in the annals of history as the oriental seat of the Roman emperors and their governors, will ever be memorable in the Church of Christ, as the place where the disciples were first called Christians.* The apostles Paul and Peter are generally acknowledged by the ancients to have jointly contributed in establishing Christianity in this populous city; the former applying himself to the Gentiles, and the latter to the Jews. At length being called off to the ministry of other churches, they appointed Ignatius and Euodius to superintend their respective flocks. In these situations they both continued till the death of Euodius; when the Jewish and Gentile converts were incorporated into one church, and Ignatius set over it by those of the apostles who were still alive. This event took place in the seventieth year of our Lord, and four years after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter; Ignatius being upwards of forty years of age.

Ecclesiastical history relates but few circumstances illustrative of the character and ministry of Ignatius. But from what is recorded of him,

* Acts xi. 26.

we may infer that his life was conspicuous, rather for eminent piety and an uniform unwearied discharge of the laborious duties of his station, than for brilliancy of talent, or variety of incident. "The lives of some eminent men (observes Mr. Cecil) seem but the course of a week repeated. Yet steadily to repeat such a week ;—to persist through *weariness and painfulness and watchings often* with the noblest aim ;—to tug up the hill of difficult, laborious, and uniform duty with unwearied perseverance ; unrefreshed by variety of road, or intervals of rest :—We must say of such an one, **THIS WAS A MAN.** The journal of an itinerant may more forcibly strike the imagination, and furnish larger scope for the biographer, but will not furnish a stronger instance of good will to men, or of piety towards God."

From the meagre materials with which we are furnished, it is evident that the assiduous attention of Ignatius to the spiritual welfare of his flock, could alone be equalled by his affection for them. Although they were exceedingly numerous, he appears to have been acquainted with every individual, and to have watched over them with the anxiety of a parent. He was indeed in a remarkable degree divested of every thing that is selfish ; and, for a long term of successive years, seemed to live only to promote the best interests of his people. Whilst eminent for his fortitude in encountering difficulties, he was not deficient in sympathy for the afflicted. Although "death, in

its most frightful forms," to use the language of an ancient writer, "could make no more impression upon the adamantine mind of Ignatius, than the dashing waves upon a rock of marble," he, nevertheless, felt the tenderest anxiety for his people; and whilst he himself was longing for the crown of martyrdom, he ever rejoiced on their account at every interval of calm, fearing lest any of his weaker brethren should be overpowered with the storm of persecution.

If we may be allowed to form an opinion of the style of his preaching, from the specimen he has given in his epistles, his sermons were rather vehement and impressive, than doctrinal and argumentative; copious and interesting, than accurate and discriminating. They would be considered by the generality of his hearers as comprehending the greatest excellencies, and slighted by the abstract reasoner as desultory and unsatisfactory. They would be equally over-rated by the former, and under-valued by the latter.

"Cold and phlegmatic men," it has been well observed, "because they possess but little power of controlling the affections of others, and perhaps have seen that power abused, would almost banish its use where God has given it, instead of laying it under salutary restraints, and giving it a salutary direction. The mathematician values nothing but proofs and demonstrations; the metaphysician looks for subtle disquisitions; the logician searches after syllogisms; and the elegant scholar watches

the turning of the periods; while the mass of hearers always have, and always will, bid high for nothing but emotion. But the just and competent judge inquires into the nature of the end pursued, and the fitness of the means to that end, in the circumstances under which they were employed.”*

Zeal to preserve his people from the contagion of false doctrine was another prominent trait in the character of Ignatius. Not contented with feeding his flock with the sincere milk of the Word, he solemnly warned them against heretics;†—“beasts in the shape of men;”—for whose conversion, indeed, they were fervently to pray, but utterly to abjure their society.

Anxious to render every part of Divine worship as edifying as possible, Ignatius paid particular attention to psalmody; and for this purpose introduced into his church at Antioch responsive singing, which seems shortly after to have been adopted in all the Christian assemblies. This delightful part of religious service we may readily suppose must have been peculiarly interesting to

* Memoirs of the Rev. George Patrick.

† Two heresies at a very early period crept into the Church of Christ; that of the Gnostics or Docetæ, (here referred to by Ignatius,) and that of the Ebionites. The Gnostics held that the body of Christ was only a phantom; and, consequently, that he was never really incarnate, or really suffered. The Ebionites looked upon Christ as a mere man;—and thus both of them virtually denied the grand doctrine of the atonement.

a man of his constitutional warmth and ardent piety. We may behold in imagination this venerable prelate directing the method, and supplying the subject, in this part of sacred worship : at one time exciting the acknowledgment of mercies received, at another anticipating promised blessings ; now tuning his harp to the mournful strain of penitence, and now to the enlivening song of rejoicing faith.

Pliny's reference to the custom of the Christians joining in singing hymns is well worthy of recollection. In his letter to the emperor Trajan, amongst other practices of the Christians, he remarks, that they were accustomed on an appointed day to sing hymns to Christ as a Deity. A circumstance which not merely points out the conspicuous place which singing occupied in their manner of worship, but also affords an unequivocal evidence of the Godhead of Christ being generally acknowledged in the first ages of Christianity.

The author cannot here refrain from expressing his regret, that so little attention is paid to this animating part of Divine worship in the generality of our churches. How much is it to be lamented, that the coarse doggrel of the old version of Psalms, and the smooth insipidity of the new, are not exchanged for more edifying compositions. Singing, when properly conducted, has ever been found a most powerful mean of keeping alive the spirit of genuine religion in a congregation ; where-

as, when otherwise performed, it has invariably proved an unmeaning, tedious, and disgusting ceremony.

We defer a more particular notice of Ignatius's views of the grand doctrines of the Gospel, till we consider his epistles, which were written whilst carried as a prisoner to Rome, and contain an unequivocal proof of the soundness of his faith, as well as the elevation of his piety. But a short character of him drawn by the Christians who accompanied him from Antioch, and were eye-witnesses of his sufferings, may here not improperly be inserted, and close this period of his history.

“ Ignatius was a man in all things like to the apostles. As a good governor by the helm of prayer and fasting, by the constancy of his doctrine and spiritual labour, he withstood the raging floods of persecution. Like a Divine lamp he enlightened the hearts of the faithful by his luminous exposition of the holy Scriptures ; and, lastly, to preserve his church, he scrupled not freely to expose himself to a bitter death.”*

* Relation of the martyrdom of Ignatius.

CHAPTER II.

Trajan persecutes the Christians.—Ignatius appears before him, and is condemned to suffer martyrdom.—Meets Polycarp and other Christians on his journey to Rome.—Writes several Epistles.

THE emperor Trajan, though described by historians as remarkable for his clemency, was for many years an opposer of the Christians. His zeal in behalf of Paganism, in connection with his dread of conspiracies, led him to regard with the utmost jealousy and distrust any associations among his subjects, and to pass a law by which all societies, which were not supported by the royal authority, were considered as illegal; being reputed nurseries of disorder and sedition. Under the sanction of this edict Christian assemblies were prohibited, and the most excellent of men were persecuted in all parts of the empire. Great numbers of them were put to death, as well in popular tumults, as by edicts and judicial proceedings. In this persecution, as we have already related, Clement, bishop of Rome, was condemned to be thrown into the sea; and the venerable Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, though an hundred and twenty years old, was severely scourged, and then crucified.

A modern writer, who appears accurately to have studied the character of Ignatius, has in a conversation between him and his deacons, Agathopus and Philo, referred to the real cause of the persecution, and graphically represented the readiness of the Christians in those days to suffer martyrdom. The conversation is indeed imaginary; but the sentiments are so appropriate, and cast so much light on this part of the history, that the Reader may not be displeased with their insertion.

IGNATIUS.

Do you not think it strange, Agathopus
And Philo, ministers and witnesses
Of the mere love and innocent meek life
Of Christians, that they should be hated thus?

AGATHOPUS.

The laws of Christ condemn a vicious world,
And gall it to revenge.

IGNATIUS.

Though that be true,
Yet still our human foes are chiefly found
Poor instruments t' exert a foreign malice,
Whose depth and horror is beyond the heart
Of silly flesh and blood. That ancient rival
Of God's dear Son pursues the Potentate
In us his subjects, and retains the nations
With all the enchanting sweet and power of evil,
To form his wretched pomp and fight his war.
When Heathen hosts attack'd of old the race
Of chosen Israel, t'was in truth a siege
Sustain'd by Jesus in his little fort
From the dark legions. Then the outstretch'd arm,

But now the cross, must conquer. Tell me, therefore,
As in your ministries you have observ'd,
How would my flock receive that bitter cup?

PHILO.

Firm in the faith.

AGATHOPUS.

Ardent for martyrdom!

I yesterday convey'd to a poor man
His dole of public alms: 'Give me,' said he,
'But one day's bread; I hope to want no more.'
Husband and wife, and other friends, take leave
Each time they're call'd from one another's sight,
As not to meet till in the world of spirits.
When at their work, 'Fulfil your task,' they cry,
'Poor hands; this drudgery will soon be o'er!'
At meals is Scripture read? They seem to need
No earthly food. Children, intelligent
Above their years, mark all their father says,
Look in his face and cry, 'Shan't we die too?'
The father in the slumbers of the night
Sees a bright angel wave him to the tortures;
He cries, 'I come!' And when he wakes, he finds
His spirit half loosen'd from his mortal prison.
The women now think of no ornaments
But shackles. Every bosom, weak before,
For the grand trial a big soul reserves.
Already to the lot of martyrs rais'd,
All see each other. Every face more shining,
And more august each little threshold seems,

IGNATIUS.

I'm glad my people are so well prepar'd;
But I've a secret hope, that Providence
Means not so much: the blow of persecution
May light indeed, but yet stop short of them.

Trajanus is accounted far from cruel,
Most gentle in the general, and humane :
Perhaps it will content him to chastise
Numbers in one. How joyfully should I
Buy the flock's safety with my single danger !*

In the year 107, Trajan visited Antioch in his way to the Parthian war. Elated with his recent conquest of the Scythians and Dacians, who, during the reign of Domitian, had insulted with impunity the majesty of Rome, the emperor entered the city with all the solemn pomp of a triumph. According to his custom in other places, he immediately enquired respecting the prosperity of the Christians, foolishly deeming their success injurious to his own celebrity, and also probably fearing that their religion would ultimately overthrow the ancient Pagan establishments. No sooner did the report of the emperor's enquiry reach Ignatius, than, regardless of his own danger, this intrepid servant of God came unrequired into his presence.

The conduct of Ignatius on this occasion has been condemned as exceedingly precipitate, and tending rather to irritate than allay the fury of the royal persecutor. It is certain that the believer in Christ should neither needlessly court persecution, nor cowardly shrink from it. The zeal, however, which errs is worthy of our respect, whilst that worldly prudence, which contrives every mean de-

* Gambold's Tragedy of Ignatius.

vice to avoid the cross, deserves our severest censure. After all, it is by no means evident, that the conduct of this Christian hero may not be vindicated. It is probable that he conceived that this display of courage would not be displeasing to a warlike prince, and his testimony to the innocence of the Christians might not be heard in vain. We are too apt to determine respecting the propriety of actions by the result, forgetting that duty is ours, and events are God's.

As soon as Ignatius was introduced into the presence of the emperor, he was addressed by him in the following manner: "What an impious spirit art thou, thus to transgress our commands, and to inveigle others into the same folly to their ruin!" He firmly replied, "Theophorus ought not to be called so; for all wicked spirits are departed from the servants of God. But if you call me wicked because I am hostile to evil spirits, I confess the charge. For I dissolve all their snares through the support of Christ the heavenly King." "And who," said Trajan, "is Theophorus?" "He who has Christ in his breast," rejoined the hero. "And thinkest thou not," enquired the emperor, "that gods reside in us also, who fight for us against our enemies?" "You mistake," replied Ignatius, "in calling the evil spirits of the Heathens gods. For there is only *one* God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son; whose kingdom be my portion!" Trajan contemptuously ex-

claimed, “ *His kingdom*, do you say, who was crucified under Pilate?” “ *His*,” answered Ignatius, “ who crucified my sin with its author, and has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of those who carry Him in their heart.” “ Dost thou then,” continued the emperor, “ carry Him that was crucified within thee?” “ I do,” replied the venerable saint, “ for it is written, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them.*”*

Irritated by the undaunted courage of the martyr, a courage which in any other cause he would have admired, the emperor endeavoured to shake his constancy by threats. But, finding him inflexible, he pronounced upon him the following sentence : “ Since Ignatius confesses, that he carries within himself Him that was crucified, we command that he be carried, bound by soldiers, to Great Rome, there to be thrown to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the people.”

During the whole of the interview we may conceive Ignatius standing before the emperor with a firm and manly air ; collected in himself, yet probably not without anxiety for the issue of the conference. But no sooner had he heard the final sentence, than every painful feeling vanished from his breast ; his countenance brightened, and his eyes glistened with delight. At length he joyfully exclaimed, “ I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards Thee ; and hast thought me worthy with the apostle Paul to be put in iron fetters.” Having said

* Martyrdom of Ignatius.

this, we are told, he joyfully put on his bonds; and then having prayed for the church, and commended it with tears unto the Lord, he was hurried away, "like a choice ram, the leader of a good flock, by the brutish soldiers."*

Thus was Ignatius enabled to profess his firm belief in that consolatory and Scriptural doctrine of the close union which subsists between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ, and to manifest from his own experience the support it affords amidst the greatest trials. "The doctrine of union with Christ by faith," remarks Mr. Milner, "now so much ridiculed, appears here in its full glory. And if ever we be called to scenes like these, we shall feel the need of it strongly, and be sensible of the impotence of those schemes of mere human invention, which are often substituted in its room. Christ *within* can alone support the heart in the hour of severe trial: the boasted moral virtue of proud philosophers is radically defective and unsound."†

It has been observed that it is not a little remarkable, that Trajan should have sent Ignatius so long and expensive a journey for execution, instead of inflicting upon him summary punishment. Probably, the emperor wished to make so public an example of this ringleader of the sect, at once more effectually to intimidate the numerous body of Christians he had left at Rome, and at the same

* Martyrdom of Ignatius.

† History of the Church of Christ.

time to excite the magistrates by his own conduct to carry on the persecution with vigour. Whatever were his motives, Divine Providence made it a means of advancing the interest of the Gospel. In consequence of this respite Ignatius was enabled to manifest the blessed support which real Christianity will afford, and also gladden the hearts of thousands by his instructive conversation and epistles. Being now obliged to desist from the public duties of his charge, he had a fine opportunity for giving full scope to all the feelings of his soul. Standing as on an eminence, he reviewed his life, re-examined the ground of his hope, and anticipated the crown which awaited him with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Being consigned to a guard of ten soldiers, Ignatius took a final leave of his beloved Antioch; and, accompanied by Philo and Agathopus, his deacons, he was conducted on foot to Seleucia, a sea-port, about sixteen miles from Antioch, the very place from which Paul and Barnabas had sailed for Cyprus. They here went on board, and after a tedious voyage arrived at Smyrna, a city of Ionia.

Whilst the ship remained in port, Ignatius was allowed the pleasure of visiting his friend Polycarp, bishop of the place. These good men had been fellow-disciples of St. John. Doubtless this meeting was accompanied in each with feelings of a peculiar character, but not of grief and despondency. So far was Polycarp from being dejected

by the circumstances of his friend, that he was enabled to rejoice with him in his present captivity, and the prospect of his violent death. He administered to him every possible encouragement, and fervently exhorted him to a firm and patient perseverance. Indeed the nature of this interview can adequately be conceived by those alone, who know from experience the power of Divine love, and how it operates in the breasts of real Christians. "There is," remarks a modern writer, "a responsive string in every real child of God, that harmonizes with the experience of their brethren, whenever they meet, and under whatever circumstances; and, like drops in contact, the love of God in Christ our Lord unites them in one spirit. This 'is a joy that the stranger intermeddleth not with.'"

During the continuance of Ignatius at Smyrna, the bishops, presbyters, and deacons, of the neighbouring churches came to visit him, to partake of his prayers and blessing, and to encourage him to steadfastness. Not satisfied with the exhortations he personally gave to these visitors, he wrote from this place four interesting letters, to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome.

Here another difficulty seems to occur. How are we to account for the circumstance, that Ignatius, guarded and conducted by a band of *ferocious* soldiers, as he himself describes them, should have been allowed free intercourse with

various communities of Christians, and opportunity to write epistles in different cities through which he passed? To this Dr. Jortin appears to have given a satisfactory answer. He supposes that the Christians, who attended or visited the martyr, offered money to those who were charged with his custody, to allow him the liberty of conversing and corresponding with his friends. And from a passage in his epistle to the Romans this conjecture appears to be probable,* as well as that the ruffian guards granted this favour in a surly and insolent manner. They would, however, without doubt, have allowed him to write any number of letters on the same terms.

These epistles are evidently the work of a man not acquainted with the learning of the schools, nor attentive to the niceties of composition, but of one who conceives boldly, and who, by expressing the spontaneous feelings of a heart glowing with love to God and man, conveys a lively impression to the minds of his readers of the nature and consolations of genuine religion. Happy will it be for those, who, by the perusal of them, are led to imitate his benevolence to man, and his piety to God!

The following advice, which he gives to the Ephesian church respecting their conduct to unbelievers and heretics, is worthy of the serious

* Οἱ δὲ εὐεργετούμενοι χεῖρους γίνονται· ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀδικήμασιν αὐτῶν μαλλὸν μαθήτευομαι. Epistle to the Romans.

attention and imitation of Christians in all ages. " Pray earnestly for them without ceasing, for there is hope of their being converted, and savingly brought to God. Afford them an opportunity of being instructed, at least, from your works. Be ye meek, when they are angry ; lowly, when they are boastful. Return your prayers for their blasphemies ; and to their error oppose your stedfastness in the faith. Take heed that no plant of the devil be found among you. But continue in all holiness and sobriety, through Jesus Christ, both in body and spirit."

The same epistle affords us a pleasing illustration of the unaffected humility of Ignatius. He alone appeared unconscious of those eminent attainments, which excited the admiration of the Christian world. " Far be it from me," remarks the venerable bishop, " to dictate to you, as though I were any one ; for although I am bound for His name, I am not yet perfected in Jesus Christ. Now I begin to be a disciple, and address you as my teachers. Truly I stand in need of being upheld by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long suffering. But since love will not permit me to be silent concerning you, I have presumed to exhort you to run together with me, according to the will of God."

But whilst Ignatius speaks thus humbly of himself, he highly extols their bishop Onesimus, probably none other than the once fugitive slave of Philemon referred to by St. Paul. He also recom-

mends the most perfect union among the members, and enforces, perhaps in somewhat too elevated a tone of authority, subjection to the bishop. The learned Dr. Jortin, after acknowledging that Ignatius went too far in his expressions, pleads as his apology the state of the times. He then properly observes, that "it was to be feared lest the heretics, who in those days were vile persons, should seduce the unwary; and mutual quarrels might have proved fatal to the common cause. A house ill-cemented, and beaten with the storms of persecution, could not have stood."*

The proper Deity, humanity, and atonement, of Christ, are distinctly set forth by Ignatius in the following passage. "The cross is, indeed, a cause of offence to unbelievers; but to them that believe it is salvation and eternal life. Where is the wise man? Where is the disputer? Where is the boasting of those who are called intelligent? For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived in the womb of Mary, according to the dispensation of God, of the seed of David, and by the Holy Ghost; and was born and baptized, that by his baptism he might purify the water."†

* Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.

† There is a remarkable coincidence between this last expression, and the language of our Church in the first collect of the baptismal service:

"Almighty and everlasting God, who of Thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water; and also didst safely lead the children of Israel Thy

Shortly afterwards he remarks, that a new star shone from heaven, and sent out its light above all other stars. "Hence," he continues, "the powers of magic were dissolved, and every band of wickedness destroyed. Hence ignorance was purged away, and ancient tyranny overthrown; God Himself appearing in human form for the introduction of eternal life. For He commenced a work which was perfected by God. Hence all things were shaken, because He designed the abolition of death."

In his epistle to the Romans, he manifests the same holy contempt for earthly things as the apostles had done, and great spirituality of mind. Still, however, his desire for martyrdom is evidently excessive, and cannot be reconciled with an entire submission to the will of God. "I write," says he, "to the churches; and signify to them all, that I die willingly for God, unless you prevent me. I beseech you, therefore, not to manifest an unseasonable love towards me. Rather encourage the wild beasts, that they may become my sepulchre, and leave nothing of my body, so that when I am asleep no one may have the trouble of paying me any funeral rites.

"From Syria to Rome I fight with wild beasts, both by land and sea, by night and day. I am

people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby Thy holy baptism; and by the baptism of Thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ in the river Jordan, didst sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin, &c."

chained to ten leopards—a band of soldiers—who are made even worse by the gratuities bestowed upon them. By their injuries I am made a better disciple; yet am I not hereby justified. I long to enjoy the wild beasts that are prepared for me! I pray that they may be eager to do their work; whom I will even provoke to devour me, and not suffer them to treat me as they have some others, whom they seemed afraid to touch. I crave your pardon; I know what is desirable for me. Now I begin to be a disciple; nor shall any thing move me of things visible or invisible, that I may obtain Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the rage of wild beasts, let tearings and rendings, let dispersion of bones, and absorption of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malicious torments of the devil, come upon me, so that I may but enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ. The world and all its kingdoms will profit me nothing. I would rather die for Christ than sway the sceptre of universal empire! Him I seek who died for us: Him I desire who rose again for us. Pardon me, my brethren; cast no obstacles in my way to life eternal; permit me to enjoy the pure light of glory. When I arrive there, I shall indeed be a man of God! Allow me, then, to imitate the sufferings of my God. If any one has Christ within him, let him conceive what I feel, and sympathize with me, knowing how I am straitened. The prince of this world wishes to draw me from my purpose, and corrupt my resolutions towards God.

Let no one of you, then, assist him, but rather join yourselves to me, that is, in fact, to God.

“ Beware of speaking about Jesus Christ, and at the same time harbouring any desire after this world. Even if, when present with you, I exhort you so to do, be not persuaded, but rather consent to the things which I now address to you. Living I write now to you, but I desire to die. My Love is crucified; there is not within me a fire that needs to be quenched by water, but One that lives and speaks within me, saying, ‘ Come to the Father.’ I have no delight in the bread that perisheth, nor in the pleasures of this life. I long for the Bread of God—the flesh of Jesus Christ, of the seed of David; and I desire to drink His blood, which is incorruptible love!”

After they had remained some time at Smyrna, his keepers, impatient of their stay, which probably had been protracted by some maritime impediment, sailed with him for Troas, a noted city of Lesser Phrygia, not far from the ruins of ancient Troy. On their arrival, Ignatius received the pleasing intelligence of the persecution having ceased* at Antioch; and here, as at Smyrna, the

* Eusebius has justly represented the state of the Christians on this *mitigation*, for it cannot properly be termed *cessation*, of the persecution. “ Trajan,” says he, “ gave a rescript, in which it was decreed that Christians should not be sought out, but that if they were convicted, they should be punished, by which, though the violence of the storm seemed to be in some measure abated, yet ill disposed persons still found opportunities

rigours of his captivity were softened by the company of Christian brethren.

Again we are reminded of the superiority of that friendship which exists between real Christians to that which is experienced by the professed votaries of pleasure: the former are united together by ties more close and indissoluble than those of consanguinity, whereas the very endearments of the latter are for the most part without benevolence, and their familiarity without confidence.

Besides the pleasing interviews which Ignatius enjoyed with the pious inhabitants of Troas, he was also permitted freely to discourse with the deputies from the different churches in the neighbouring country; his guards, probably from the same mercenary motives as at Smyrna, not depriving him of this privilege. He also availed himself of this opportunity of writing to his beloved friend Polycarp, and to the churches at Philadelphia and Smyrna. In all of these letters he speaks in the most affectionate terms of his deserted flock at Antioch, and requests that persons might be sent to console them under his loss, and to congratulate them on the abatement of the persecution.

In his epistle to the church at Philadelphia he

to exert their malice, whilst sometimes the populace, and sometimes the governors, were contriving ways to oppress them. Thus the persecution, though it was not general, was kept up in different places; and many of the faithful were exposed to various trials and afflictions, and obtained the honour of martyrdom."

thus strongly testifies his abhorrence of a self-righteous spirit, and the simplicity of his Christian faith. "If any preach not of Jesus Christ, they are mere monuments and sepulchres of the dead, on which are only written the names of men. The objects dear to me are Jesus Christ, His cross, His death, His resurrection, and the faith which is in them, by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified."

A specious zeal for moral duties arising from an ignorance of vital godliness, or, in other words, the substitution of morality for religion, has been a source of great evil to many modern churches. Such attempts were unknown in the primitive church of Antioch. Their venerable pastor gave to the grand doctrines of the Gospel their native prominence, and at the same time secured to all the parts of Christian obedience their due regard, in the only way in which it can be done effectually, that is, by representing them as springing out of a believing union with Christ, the living Head, and as being acceptable to God only through His availing intercession. On the other hand, to withdraw from Christianity its most distinguishing doctrines, or to maintain them in a partial and imperfect manner, is to seal up or pollute the springs whence the living and fertilizing waters of genuine piety and active benevolence are derived. The consequence must inevitably be a dearth of all those principles, which should animate the mind of a believer, and of those good works, which should

render the religion of Christ a blessing to mankind.

The epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp contains a graphical statement of the duties and character of the faithful pastor, and deserves to be seriously read by ministers. To watch with a spirit ever attentive; to pray without ceasing; to speak to each member of the church separately; to seek out all by name; and to advise with every one of the flock on the article of marriage—are duties which he earnestly enforces on his friend.

There is, indeed, a rich vein of sound instruction and practical religion running through all his epistles. Polycarp has left this attestation of their excellence:—"they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus." To this testimony we may add, that while these epistles discover the piety and faithfulness of their writer, they also exhibit the strong sense which the Church then entertained of the infinite importance of the doctrines of Christ's Godhead, humanity, and priesthood. And they shew that these doctrines constituted the faith, and were the pillars on which the edifice of Christian charity, patience, and holiness, rested.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that there are some sentiments in the epistles of Ignatius, respecting the authority of bishops and other ecclesiastical officers, which can hardly be justified by the Scriptures, and are certainly expressed in very unguarded terms. And it is probable that

these intemperate expressions were in after-ages brought forward to support the bishops of the church of Rome in the most flagrant abuse of their authority.* The best of men, it should ever be remembered, are but fallible creatures; and, therefore, whilst we highly reverence them as the excellent of the earth, it is our duty to follow them no farther than they follow Christ.

After all, it is well worthy of notice that the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, are plainly represented in these epistles as recognized at this early period. The bishops are described as holding the presidency in the church,

* "If I, during the short interval I was with your bishop, enjoyed such heavenly and spiritual intercourse with him, how must I felicitate you in being so joined to him as the church is to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father, so that all things may agree in the same unity!"—Epistle to the Ephesians. "Whomsoever the Master of the house sends to be over his own household, we ought to receive, even as we would Him that sent him. It is, therefore, evident that we ought to look upon the bishop as we would upon the Lord."—Epistle to the Ephesians.

"Be all obedient to your bishop, as Jesus Christ was to the Father; and to the presbyters, as to the apostles. The deacons also reverence as the ordinance of God. Let no man meddle in church affairs without order from the bishop. It is not lawful without the bishop to baptize, or to celebrate a love-feast. Whatever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing unto God; so that whatever is done, may be sure and well done."—Epistle to the Smyrneans.

"Reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ, and consider the bishop as the representative of the Father of all."—Epistle to the Trallians.

as the representatives of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ; the presbyters as supplying the office of apostles; and the deacons as occupying an inferior situation in the ministry. "In the present age," remarks Mr. Collinson, "in which no bounds seem to be set to claims of liberty of conscience, it is deserving of the most serious consideration among Christians, that the chief topic insisted upon by the two apostolical fathers, Clement and Ignatius, is Church union; and the great object of their writings is to dissuade men from separating, for slight pretences, from their lawful pastors. We do not endeavour to persuade any to act so as to do violence to their consciences; but we wish to shew that it is the will of God that private opinion should on many occasions give way; and that individuals, instead of arrogating a continual right of choosing and judging for themselves, should consider that without some submission there can, in great societies, be no union and concord, which are most acceptable in God's sight."*

From Troas the holy bishop and his attendants sailed to Neapolis, a maritime town of Macedonia; and from thence proceeded to Philippi, a place familiar to Christian ears, being inseparably associated with the personal labours and epistolary writings of the apostle Paul. At this place they again experienced from Christian friends that

* Bampton Lectures.

attention and courtesy so congenial to Christianity. Indeed Ignatius now appeared like an ascending Elijah ; and every one that came in contact with him was anxious to catch his falling mantle.

They then passed on foot through Macedonia in their way to Epidamnus, being accompanied by some of the Philippian Christians. Whence again they took ship and sailed across the Adriatic, and then, entering the Tuscan sea, they came at length in view of Puteoli.

As great military actions give a celebrity to the smallest village near which they were performed, so the little town of Puteoli was viewed with considerable interest by Ignatius, as the place which St. Paul had a few years before visited in circumstances not very dissimilar to his own. He requested his guards to allow him to walk from thence to Rome through the Appii Forum and Three Taverns, that he might thus tread in the very footsteps of the great apostle. His request, however, was not granted. But after a day and night's delay at Puteoli, a prosperous gale springing up, they were quickly brought to Ostia, a town at the mouth of the Tyber ; the holy martyr longing as much to reach the end of his race, as his keepers, weary of their charge, to deliver him into the hands of their masters.

The Christians at Rome, having daily expected his arrival, came in crowds to meet him ; their joy in beholding him being mingled with extreme regret in the prospect of the cruel death which

would soon deprive them of so venerable a saint. Some of them, it seems, had influence with government, which they were anxious to exert for his preservation. But no sooner had Ignatius ascertained their intention, than he expressed his decided disapprobation of it, referred them to the pleasure he derived from the consideration of his approaching martyrdom, and entreated them “to put no obstacles in his way, now he was hastening to his crown.”

This conduct of Ignatius was certainly heroical; and, as such, seems to demand our admiration. We fear, however, it will not bear serious discussion. “Ought not,” enquires Mr. Milner, “the Roman Christians to have endeavoured to save Ignatius’s life, by all honest means?—Has any man a right to hinder others from attempting to save the life of the innocent? Or will his entreaties give them a right to be as indifferent for his preservation as he is himself?—Ought not every man, however prepared for death, and preferring it, if God please, to use all possible methods, consistent with a good conscience, to preserve his life? I cannot answer these queries to the advantage of Ignatius’s determination. Was not his desire of martyrdom excessive? If he was wrong, it was doubtless a mistake of judgment. I fear the example of Ignatius did harm in this respect in the church. Martyrdom was, we know, made too much of in the third century:—so hard is it to be kept from all extremes:—*ours* are generally of the opposite kind.

“ These reflections are suggested, in part, by the example of St. Paul. He, indeed, would go to Jerusalem, though he knew he should be bound. But the certainty of death was not before his eyes ; and, therefore, his resolution in this case is not similar to that of Ignatius. As for the rest, he took no pains to dissuade others from saving his life. He took pains to save it himself. He blames his friends at Rome for deserting him. And that eagerness for martyrdom which Ignatius expresses I see neither in Paul, nor in any of the apostles. They rather refer themselves calmly to the will of God in things which concern themselves. On the whole there appears in Ignatius the same zeal for God and love to Jesus Christ, and the same holy contempt of earthly things, which was so eminent in the apostles ; but, I suspect, not an equal degree of calm resignation to the Divine Will.”*

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

Ignatius is brought before the Prefect.—The circumstance of his martyrdom.

ON their arrival at Rome, Ignatius was presented to the prefect of the city, who, anxious to make his punishment as conspicuous as possible, fixed on one of their great festivals for its execution; on which occasion it was customary to entertain the people with the bloody conflicts of gladiators, and the fighting of wild beasts.

In the mean time Ignatius, and the brethren that resorted to him, were continually engaged in acts of devotion. On the morning of his execution he kneeled down and addressed his petitions, like the first martyr, to the LORD JESUS CHRIST; earnestly beseeching Him to bless his Church, to unite his people together in love, and to put a stop to the persecution.

He was then hastily led to the amphitheatre, and found that splendid building crowded with an innumerable multitude, anxious to feast their eyes on his expiring tortures, and manifesting their zeal for Paganism by loud execrations of the martyr and his God. At length the lions were let loose, and filled the edifice with horrid roarings, whilst with a haughty step they paced the spacious area, and frowned on the surrounding company.

A chilling horror now pervaded the breasts of the few pious individuals, who had accompanied the martyr to the closing scene of his pilgrimage, whilst a savage joy lightened the countenances of the cruel spectators. The venerable bishop alone appeared unmoved at the tremendous scene. At length in that mood of mind which sports at suffering, he exclaimed, "I shall now as God's corn be ground between the teeth of these wild beasts, and become white bread for my heavenly Master." By this time the lions had beheld him, and rushed with open jaws upon their unshrinking prey. A shout of triumph now echoed through the amphitheatre; and in a moment his mournful friends perceived that the bitterness of death was past; and the savage spectators that their brutal sport was ended.

"An admiration of Rome," remarks a writer in a celebrated modern Review, "is one of the worst heresies which we bring with us from school; and it cannot admit of a doubt that the elegance acquired from an early intercourse with ancient authors is dearly purchased by the perverted notions of glory and greatness so generally imbibed at the same time. A wise teacher of youth will always endeavour to counteract impressions favourable to the character of the Romans, by representing them in their true colours, as a selfish, perfidious, cruel, superstitious race of barbarians, endowed with the scanty and doubtful virtues of a savage life, but deformed by more than its ordinary

excess ; and whose original purity of manners, and good faith amongst themselves, did not endure a moment longer than it enabled them to subdue the rest of the world.”*

A few bones were all that remained of Ignatius : these were carefully collected by the Christians, who were eye-witnesses of his martyrdom, and honourably interred in a cemetery near the city of Antioch. Thus a decent and commendable respect was paid to the remains of an eminent martyr, similar to which other instances are recorded. But by degrees this pious veneration degenerated into an abject superstition. In the fourth century the emperor Theodosius removed the relics of Ignatius with great pomp and ceremony to a temple, built within the city, and dedicated to his memory.

Thus “ this valiant martyr of Christ,” to adopt the language of the original writers of his martyrdom, “ trod under foot the devil, and finished the course which he had desired in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD, by whom, and with whom, all glory and power be to the FATHER, with the blessed SPIRIT, for ever and ever, Amen.”

Ignatius suffered death in the tenth year of Trajan’s reign, December 20th, 107, and about the eightieth year of his age.

* Edinburgh Review, No. 42, p. 396.

POLYCARP.

CHAPTER I.

Polycarp a slave to a Christian lady.—Becomes a disciple of the apostle John.—Is ordained Bishop of Smyrna.—An account of St. John.

POLYCARP, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, long survived his friend Ignatius, whom, in many respects, he seems to have resembled. Like him he appears the plain Christian pastor; void of any pretensions to great attainments in human literature; but sound in the faith, esteeming his labour his reward, and ready to die for the Lord Jesus.

This venerable man was born in the East; but the exact place of his nativity, and the circumstances of his parents, are unknown. At a very early period of his life he is reported to have been sold as a slave to a noble matron, whose name was Calisto. This lady resided at Smyrna, and is said to have possessed a large fortune and eminent piety.

In such a family it may be conjectured that

our young captive experienced little of the usual rigours of slavery : especially as we have ground to believe that he here exchanged the galling bondage of sin and Satan for “ the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

“ A liberty unsung
By poets, and by senators unprais'd ;
E'en liberty of heart, deriv'd from heaven ;
Bought with His blood who gave it to mankind,
And seal'd with the same token.”

During Polycarp's continuance with this pious mistress, he was not only carefully instructed by her in the rudiments of Christianity, but enjoyed also the privilege of attending the ministry of Bucolus, the vigilant and holy bishop of the place. Of a youth so piously disposed, and so favourably situated for Divine instruction, a minute account would be most interesting ; but curiosity must be satisfied with confused, and sometimes improbable, intelligence.

On the death of his kind benefactress, which happened whilst he was still a youth, Polycarp appears immediately to have become a stated disciple of the apostle John, and an inmate in his family ; an event which he never after referred to without the most lively gratitude. The society of such a man must indeed have proved to every real Christian an unspeakable advantage ; but more particularly to a well disposed youth, like Polycarp, who had thereby an opportunity not merely

of obtaining information on the most important subjects, but also of modelling his yet unformed character by that of an eminently pious, amiable, and inspired apostle. Here again we look round with anxiety for some contemporary historian to pourtray the family circle of the venerable apostle ; to represent the aged saint at subsequent periods of his life, surrounded by an Ignatius, a Papias, and a juvenile Polycarp, anxiously hanging on his lips, and receiving the most valuable information for the regulation of their doctrines, and their ministerial conduct. But, alas ! little can be known in these respects, except what casual mention, and uncertain tradition, will supply.

Will it be improper, in this dearth of original materials, to insert an ideal conversation between two of his highly favoured disciples ? It is written by the pen of one who seems accurately to have studied the characters of these excellent men ; and will, perhaps, not prove uninteresting to the Reader. The conversation is supposed to have taken place between Ignatius and Polycarp on their meeting at Smyrna ; but refers almost entirely to the happy period they had been privileged to pass together under the roof of their apostolic preceptor. A few alterations are made from the original.

POLYCARP.

“ At Jesu’s name, with recollected awe,
 We’d stand adoring : John would drop a tear,
 As for an old acquaintance ; then correct it
 With a smile——

* Wonder not, sons,' said he, ' that still my heart
 Emotions feels for Jesus as a man.
 I knew Him such, most amiable and kind !
 And every little passage of His life,
 His walks, His lodging, and His plain repast,
 Not without shifts of poverty, recur.
 How many silly questions have we ask'd Him,
 While He gave answers, that, with all their depth,
 Would please ! Cheerful, indeed, He was to us ;
 But let me tell you, sons, He was within
 A pensive man, and always had a load
 Upon His spirits.'—

IGNATIUS.

" That was for our sins.
 Mourning was His, that constant joy of faith
 Might be the character of our poor service,
 Whose guilt He bore, and drank up all the curse.

POLYCARP.

" O precious door of hope ! Freed by His blood
 From all the mighty judgments and the plagues
 Of God's last wrath, when with the chosen bands,
 Into the New Jerusalem receiv'd,
 Shall I with them partake triumphant rest ?

IGNATIUS.

" Low at the feet, not only of great John,
 But of the meanest servant of my Lord,
 May I be found that day."*——

How long Polycarp resided with St. John is not ascertained. But it appears he was yet very

* Gambold's Tragedy of Ignatius.

young when appointed deacon under Bucolus, the bishop of Smyrna, which office he discharged with great labour and success. At length, on the decease of his worthy diocesan, he was, notwithstanding his youth, appointed his successor, by the apostle John, and those of his brethren who were yet alive. Thus this venerable minister of Christ received the government of the Church at Smyrna from those who had been eye-witnesses and ministers of our Lord; and, for the long period of seventy-four successive years, was spared to inculcate those all important doctrines, which he had himself learnt from the mouth of an apostle.

Let us here pause for a moment to admire the wonderful operations of a superintending Providence. Polycarp at length becomes an invaluable blessing to the Church of Christ, by regulating, during many years, a numerous flock with apostolical simplicity, and training up a succession of pious men for the sacred work of the ministry. And how was he brought into so important a situation, and qualified to discharge the duties of it? "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." * In consequence of his being placed, whilst a child, in a state of servitude, an event

* Isaiah xlii. 16.

which he then probably considered as a great calamity, he was early trained in the ways of God, brought under the ministry of a Christian bishop, and at length made the immediate disciple of an apostle, who appears more than any of his brethren to have imbibed the Spirit of his Divine Master. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"* It is truly profitable to trace the hand of God in the accomplishment of His own purposes. Such an exercise when entered upon with a Christian spirit, and regulated by Christian prudence, will increase the piety and humility of a believer, and excite his gratitude and admiration.

The vicinity of his apostolical friend was, doubtless, considered by Polycarp as an invaluable blessing. On every emergency he would have an inspired teacher to consult; and would also frequently be honoured by his company, when he paid his pastoral visits to the Asiatic churches.

During the former part of Domitian's reign the Christians appear to have been unmolested; but towards the conclusion of it this emperor increased in cruelty, and at length renewed the horrors of Nero's persecution. Although Polycarp appears himself to have escaped the fury of the storm, this season must have been a peculiarly afflictive one to him, in consequence of the banishment and

* Rom. xi. 33.

subsequent sufferings of his venerable friend, the apostle John. Previous to his exile this holy man is said by Tertullian to have been wantonly cast by Domitian into a cauldron of boiling oil, but miraculously preserved from receiving any injury. This wonderful preservation, however, made no impression on the proud emperor's heart,* who banished him into the solitary isle of Patmos. But in this lonesome spot he received the most distinguished honours; for it was here that he was favoured with the visions recorded in the Book of the Revelation.

This dreadful persecution was not of very long duration. On the accession of Nerva to the throne, the laws against the Christians appear to have been repealed; the chains of many worthy persons confined in the prison were struck off, and the captives permitted to revisit their native country. On this occasion John returned from Patmos, and again superintended the Asiatic churches.

During one of his apostolical visits a singular

* Some persons have denied the reality of this miracle because no effect was produced by it on the mind of the tyrant. To this it may be replied, that sin frequently not merely pollutes the mind, but so infatuates the judgment, as completely to indispose the sinner, in matters of morality and religion, to receive conviction from the most indubitable evidence. Besides, when a person is violently bent to believe or disbelieve, he is more than half persuaded that things are as he desires. And hence the most stupendous miracles are hastily concluded by him to be either delusions and impostures, or works performed by the agency of evil spirits.

circumstance is recorded respecting him : the place where it happened was a city near Ephesus ; and by some supposed to be Smyrna, where the subject of this memoir was then bishop. The following is the substance of the account, which was originally written by Clemens Alexandrinus, and is inserted in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History. On St. John's return from the isle of Patmos, at the request of the bishops, he went to the neighbouring churches, partly to ordain ministers, and partly to regulate the congregations. Whilst at a city not far from Ephesus, he was much struck with the appearance and fervour of a young Christian, and warmly recommended him to the charge of the bishop. Passing through the same place sometime afterwards, he demanded of the bishop his pledge ; and on his not at first comprehending his meaning, he added, " The young man, the soul of our brother committed to your custody, I require." " Alas !" exclaimed the bishop in tears, " He is dead." " By what death ?" enquired the apostle. " He is dead to God," replied the bishop, " and is captain of a band of robbers, who infest this mountain." John, in the vehemence of his grief, exclaimed, " I appointed a good keeper for my brother's soul : get me a horse, and let me have a guide." The apostle then hastened to the place ; and, as he expected, was soon taken by the robbers. " Bring me," said he, " to your captain." The young robber saw him at a distance, and advanced to meet him with a ferocious air ; but at

length recognizing the apostle, he was overwhelmed with shame, and fled. John followed him, and cried, "My son, why fliest thou from thy father, unarmed and old? Fear not; as yet there remaineth hope of salvation. I will undertake for thee with Christ. I will hazard my soul for thine. Believe me, Christ hath sent me." Hearing this, the young man stood still, trembled, and wept bitterly. At length he embraced the apostle, and expressed in language, scarcely articulate for tears, the anguish of his mind. John prayed, exhorted, and brought him back to the society of the Christians; nor did he leave him, till he judged him fully restored by Divine grace. This venerable apostle died about the conclusion of the first century, at the advanced age of a hundred years.

Some little time before his decease he was so enfeebled with old age as to be obliged to be carried into the different churches; and, being unable to deliver any long discourse, his custom was to say on these occasions, "My dear children, love one another." On being asked, why he told them only one thing, he answered, "Nothing else is needed."

CHAPTER II.

Polycarp is visited by Ignatius.—Receives a letter from him.—Writes an epistle to the Philippians.

IN the year 107, Polycarp, as we have mentioned above, was visited by Ignatius on his way to martyrdom. They had been fellow-disciples of the apostle John ; but whether they had seen each other since that interesting period cannot now be ascertained, though, doubtless, the important duties of their respective situations must have rendered their visits to each other very rare. Their meeting on this occasion was affectionate in the highest degree, and can be more easily conceived than described. The solid and precious fruits of Polycarp's ministry were most gratifying to his friend, and the religious intercourse which they now were permitted to enjoy with the deputies from the neighbouring Churches afforded to all parties the most refined pleasure and spiritual benefit. Ignatius, like another Barnabas, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, who had done such great things for them ; whilst Polycarp was so far from being discouraged at the approaching martyrdom of his friend, as even to congratulate him on his sufferings.

Shortly after Polycarp was left by his venerable friend, he received from him a letter, which he had an opportunity of writing on his journey to Rome. After having expressed his gratitude to God for their late intercourse, he gives Polycarp the most suitable advice with respect to the due discharge of his pastoral office ; the benefit of which he probably experienced to the conclusion of his life. “ I beseech thee, (says he) by the grace with which thou art clothed, to press forward in thy course, and to admonish all that they may obtain salvation. Be studious of that best of blessings, unity. Bear with all men, as also the Lord doth with thee. Bear with all in love, as indeed thou dost. Pray without ceasing. Ask for more understanding than thou hast at present. Watch, and possess a spirit ever attentive. Speak to each individually, as God shall enable thee. Bear with the infirmities of all, as a perfect combatant : the more labour the more reward.

“ If thou love only the obedient disciples, thou hast no reward : rather strive to subdue the turbulent by meekness. Every wound is not cured by the same application. Paroxysms must be mollified by lenient embrocations. Be wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove. The times demand thee, as a pilot is wanted in a storm ; and thy prayers will be as a secure haven to the tempest-tossed ship. Be sober-minded as the soldier of God ; whose theme is immortality and eternal life. I will be thy surety, and my bonds which thou hast

loved. Let not those who seem worthy of credit, but teach other doctrines, circumvent thee. Stand firm as the anvil to the stroke. It is the part of a great wrestler to be mangled, and yet to conquer. Improve in diligence daily. Consider the times ; and expect Christ, the Son of God, who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for us made visible ; impalpable, and impassible, yet for us subjected to sufferings, enduring all things for our salvation.

“ Let not widows be neglected. Next to the Lord, be thou their guardian. Let nothing be done without thy cognizance ; neither do thou any thing without the mind of God. Let your assemblies be more frequent. Seek out all by name : overlook not slaves of either sex ; yet let them not be puffed up ; but serve more faithfully to the glory of God, that they may obtain from Him a better liberty. Let them not desire to be set at liberty at the public cost, lest they be found slaves of lust.

“ Exhort my sisters to love the Lord, and be satisfied with their own husbands, both in flesh and spirit. In like manner exhort my brethren in the name of Jesus Christ, to love their wives even as the Lord the Church.

“ If any one can remain in a state of celibacy, for the honour of the Lord, let him do so without boasting ; for if he boast, he is lost ; and if he desire to be more noticed than the bishop, he is corrupted. Those who wish to marry ought to

enter into that connection with the consent of the bishop, that the marriage may be after the will of God, and not after the lusts of the flesh. Let all things be done to the honour of God."

Towards the conclusion of the epistle Polycarp is requested to send an approved messenger to the Church of Antioch to comfort its members, and give them every necessary information respecting their venerable bishop. Ignatius appears to have been prevented writing himself, in consequence of his hasty removal from Troas. This injunction, it is scarcely necessary to say, was faithfully attended to.

About the time of Ignatius's martyrdom, the pious subject of this narrative wrote an epistle to the Philippians, which, as well as the epistles of Ignatius, was for many years publicly read in the Eastern churches, and has happily survived the ravages of time. It makes no pretensions to literary fame; and, indeed in pathos and vigour, is inferior to those of his fellow-disciple. Its object, however, is most excellent; for it directly tends to promote faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and the best feelings in the heart of every Reader.

Polycarp commences his epistle in the true spirit of a martyr, by denominating "the bonds of the saints the diadems of such as are chosen by God and our Lord." The presbyters he exhorts to "abstain from all anger and covetousness; not easily to believe accusations, nor to be severe in judging, knowing that we are all debtors by sin." He then enforces upon the Philippians the duty of

receiving Christ, as the propitiation for sin, and example of holiness.

“ Let us, therefore, perpetually cleave to the hope and pledge of our righteousness, even to Jesus Christ ; who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth ; but endured all for us, that we might live through Him. Let us, therefore, be imitators of His patience ; and if we suffer for His name, we glorify Him ; for this example He has given us by Himself, and so have we believed.” He afterwards offers up this holy aspiration in their behalf ;—“ Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the everlasting High Priest Himself, the Son of God, even Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth, and in all meekness and unity, in patience and long-suffering, in forbearance and purity ; and grant unto you a lot and portion among His saints, and to us with you, and to all that are under the heavens, who shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Father, who raised Him from the dead. Pray for all saints ; pray also for kings, and all that are in authority, and for those who persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest in all things, and that ye may be perfect in Christ.”

The chief thing, however, that merits attention in this epistle is the truly Christian manner in which he mourns over one of their presbyters, named Valens, and his wife, who had fallen into

sin through covetousness. It clearly evinces, that, whilst Christian fidelity compelled him to bear testimony against sin, he felt the tenderest commiseration for the person and state of the sinner. "I am greatly grieved," said he, "for Valens, who was once a presbyter among you, that he should be so ignorant of the place that has been assigned to him. Wherefore I admonish you to abstain from covetousness, and to be pure and faithful. Abstain from all evil. For how can he, that in these things cannot govern himself, be able to prescribe them to another? If a man does not abstain from covetousness, he will be polluted with idolatry, and be judged as if he were a Gentile. But who of you are ignorant of the judgment of God? Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world, as Paul teaches? But I have neither perceived nor heard any thing of this kind in you among whom the blessed Paul laboured, and who are named in the beginning of his epistle. For he glories of you in all the Churches, which were then acquainted with God; but we did not then know Him. Wherefore, my brethren, I am exceedingly sorry both for him and his wife, to whom God grant genuine repentance. Be ye also moderate upon this occasion, and do not regard such as enemies, but endeavour to restore them as suffering and erring members, that ye may save your whole body. By so doing ye shall edify your own selves."

CHAPTER III.

Polycarp travels to Rome.—Differs from Anicetus respecting the time of keeping Easter.—Opposes the heresy of Marcion.

FROM the time that Polycarp wrote his epistle we have no account of him for many years. We cannot doubt he steadily pursued his Christian course, regulated his conduct by the judicious advice of his deceased friend Ignatius, and was made an unspeakable blessing to thousands, by turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. No accredited annals, however, give us any information of his labours, or of the names and circumstances of his people.

It is highly probable, that, during his long protracted ministry, Polycarp directed the studies and pursuits of many young men who dedicated themselves to that sacred office : of one only, however, we have any account ; namely, of Irenæus, who was afterwards the bishop of the Church at Lyons, and who ever retained the greatest regard and reverence for his venerable preceptor.

During his long life Polycarp must also frequently have been called to witness the horrid ravages made by persecution in the Churches of Christ, and the dreadful calumnies which were eagerly propagated against them. Indeed, it ap-

pears not a little remarkable, that one who filled so conspicuous a situation as he did was enabled to weather so many and such dreadful storms. But “there is an appointed time for man upon the earth ;” and hence, in the midst of the most imminent danger, the servants of God are preserved with sacred care until their work is done.

About the year 158, Polycarp travelled to Rome to hold a conference with Anicetus, the bishop of that see, respecting the time of keeping Easter.* It is singular that a circumstance of so little importance in itself should at so early a period, and during times of persecution, have excited so much interest in the Christian world. The one party were of opinion that it should be observed like the Jewish Passover, as a fixed feast at the full moon ; the other contended that it should be considered as a moveable festival, and that it should be observed on the Lord’s day following. Each party procured their own practice from apostolical tradition : Anicetus, and the generality of the Western Churches, favoured the latter practice ; Polycarp, and the Eastern Churches, the former. It is not improbable that they were both in the right as to fact ; it being the known practice of the apostles to become all things to all men in matters of indifference, and to comply with the customs of every place they came to, as far as they innocently could. Hence Polycarp might know that St. John, out of

* Eusebius and Jerome.

this prudential compliance, kept Easter upon one day at one place, and Anicetus might be equally certain that St. Peter observed it upon another day at another place, for the same reason. The error then here committed was a mistake in judgment, and not in fact, a disproportioned and excessive zeal in a matter not worth contending for.

When will even good men learn to discriminate between the comparative importance of the essentials and circumstantialia of religion? It were well if every minister of the Gospel had the following observation of the pious Baxter at once engraven in his memory, and embodied in his practice: "Having most to do with ignorant miserable people, I am commanded by my charity and reason to treat with them of that which their salvation lieth on, and not to dispute with them on formalities and niceties, when the question is presently to be determined, whether they shall dwell for ever in heaven, or in hell."* There is a remark also of the excellent Philip Henry, which breathes a similar spirit: "In those things wherein all the people of God are agreed, I will spend my zeal; and wherein they differ, I will endeavour to walk according to the light that God hath given me, and charitably to believe that others do so too."†

But though Polycarp and Anicetus still retained their predilection for their former opinions, they

* Narrative of his life and times.

† Life of Philip Henry.

felt and manifested a sincere regard for each other's character; and each agreed to observe his own custom, without any breach of Christian charity. In token of their attachment to each other being unaltered, they communicated together at the Holy Sacrament, whilst Anicetus, to shew his respect and affection for Polycarp, insisted on his consecrating the elements. Indeed, the amiable spirit of our Asiatic bishop seems insensibly to have excited the love of the beholder, before he knew how much reason there was to admire him. To apply the beautiful observation which Tacitus makes respecting Agricola; "A good man you would readily have judged him to be, and would rejoice to find that he was a great man."*

Whilst Polycarp continued in Rome, he became engaged in a much more important controversy; and his labours appear to have been attended with considerable benefit to the cause of Christianity. The heresy of Marcion† was at that time prevalent in the city; and several persons, who had once made a profession of the true faith, were seduced by it. In the mean time Marcion, in order to give weight to his sentiments, endeavoured to insinuate into

* Bonum virum facile crederes, magnum libenter.

† This heretic is supposed to have belonged to the sect of the Docetæ. He rejected the whole of the Old Testament, and mutilated the New. He also denied that Christ had a human nature; and, in addition to these errors, held two principles after the manner of the Manichees, in order to account for the origin of evil.

the minds of the people, that there was an agreement in doctrines between himself and Polycarp. It is not surprising that Marcion should make such an attempt, or that Polycarp should consider it as his duty to use the most decisive measures to disclose the falsehood of the heretic. Marcion meeting him one day in the street, called out to him, " Polycarp, own us." " I do," replied the zealous bishop, " own thee—to be the first-born of Satan."*

Let not the reader be startled at the severity of the expression. To pretend to think favorably of those who would overturn the essentials of Christianity is not real charity to the individuals, and at the same time it is indifference to the truths of God; whilst faithfully to point out their awful situation is the most likely way, under the Divine blessing, to guard real Christians against their errors, and also to " recover the unhappy heretics themselves out of the snare of the devil." Remember the awful language of him, who was willing to spend and be spent in promoting the best interests of his fellow-creatures: " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." And again, " Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed."

Polycarp had a peculiar dread of the simplicity

* Irenæus's work against heresies.

of the Christian faith being corrupted. Hence, when erroneous notions in religion were brought forward in his presence, he would frequently exclaim, "To what times, O God, hast thou reserved me!" and would leave the place where he had heard any such discourse.*

But whilst the good bishop of Smyrna thus boldly protested against impiety, his heart was never steeled against the feelings of humanity. We have already had occasion to notice the tender concern he manifested for the person of Valens, who had disgraced his profession by flagrant cupidity; and no doubt he now fully acted up to the important advice of his deceased friend, by praying fervently for the conversion of the heretic whilst he utterly abjured his society.

By this time the venerable subject of this narrative was very far advanced in years; but he still seemed to possess all the energy of youth. His zeal in his Divine Master's cause indeed knew no abatement to the hour of his martyrdom. The portrait which the pen of inspiration has drawn of the venerable Jewish legislator,—“His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated,”—was not more characteristic of the aged Moses, than of the aged Polycarp.

If the remark be just, that a pious minister, cut off in the prime of his life and labours, is removed in judgment, we may surely add, that when such

* Irenæus's Epistle to Florinus.

an one is continued to a people for a long series of active and efficient services, however ripe he himself may appear for glory, he is spared in mercy ; for it is in this world alone that he can glorify his Saviour among sinners, or promote their happiness.

“ Here, he stands between the living and the dead ! Here, he sustains the highest office that can be devolved upon a human being,—that of an ambassador from Christ to sinners ! When his lamp is burnt out here, it will blaze brighter in a better world ; but it will be no longer a light, to shew wretched sinners the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world ! When his voice is lost in death, it will awake again in eternal praise ; but it will no more say to the perishing, Behold the Lamb ! In this view how important is a week !—a day !—an hour ! ”*

O that this consideration produced its proper effect on the minds of preachers and people. How would the former then deliver every sermon as if they “ ne’er should preach again ; ” and the latter prize every ordinance as if it were assuredly their last.

* Life of the Rev. G. Patrick.

CHAPTER IV.

Aurelius persecutes the Christians.—Polycarp is apprehended, and condemned to be burnt alive.—The circumstances of his martyrdom.—His character.

THE whole reign of Marcus Antoninus, or, as he is frequently called, Aurelius, was a most afflictive season to the Church of God. This emperor was a virulent persecutor of the Christians; and it cannot even be said, in extenuation of his crime, that he oppressed them through ignorance of their moral character. He knew them, and yet hated them; and, so far from treating them with the least commiseration, he encouraged his savage magistrates to torture them in the most cruel manner. The heart sickens at recounting the miseries he deliberately inflicted on the helpless sufferers, and turns away with disgust from the royal persecutor, and his cruel assassins.

It may at first appear remarkable, that an emperor, who is celebrated by historians for his virtues and accomplishments, should have manifested such an unrelenting enmity to the most harmless of his subjects. But we behold in him a character by no means singular; a self-righteous moralist, puffed up with pride and a sense of his own attainments; and, from this very circumstance,

feeling a peculiar hatred to the humiliating doctrines of the Gospel. "There is," as Dr. Haweis justly remarks, "a hatred and inveteracy in self-righteous all-sufficiency against the real Christian, never felt by the most profligate or savage. The blaze of rage in a Nero is as the flash of lightning; the rooted enmity of an Aurelius is like the inextinguishable fire in the bowels of the volcano."

The stoical philosophy, indeed, of this emperor had a direct tendency to increase his prejudices against Christianity, and its faithful votaries. Did he hear that the Christians encountered every sort of torment unappalled, it was attributed by him to no better principle than that of sullen and irrational obstinacy; or was he informed that they closed their lives in fervent prayer and praise, this he considered as merely bombastic and ostentatious parade; far different from the magnanimous silence and calm dignity with which his favourite philosophers would meet their fate. In short, the very sentiments of Aurelius account for his being little affected with the sufferings of the martyrs. According to his own principles, he ought not to have been moved at all.

For some time before the martyrdom of Polycarp, persecution raged around him in its most terrific forms. Numbers were torn with whips, till their very veins and arteries were laid open; others were condemned to be devoured by wild beasts; and others, placed upon the shells of sea-

fish, were exposed to the most exquisite torments. In short, every step was taken, and every species of cruelty was resorted to, that might have a tendency to induce the Christians to deny their Saviour. One who witnessed the persecution observes, “ Much did Satan contrive against them ; but, thanks to God, without effect.” So supported, indeed, were they by the grace of Christ during their bitter sufferings, that they seldom uttered a sigh or a groan. The fire of their savage tormentors was cold to them ; for their only desire was to avoid that fire which is unquenchable, and to obtain those good things, “ which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.”*

During this tremendous season Polycarp “ in patience possessed his soul,” neither disheartened by the fury of his enemies, nor hurried on by an undue zeal to present himself before them. Cleansed by the blood of Christ,† and eminently possessed of that faith which overcometh the world, this aged Christian might, with strict propriety, adopt that language which, applied to Cato, is replete with ignorance and pride :

“ Let guilt or fear
Disturb man’s rest, Cato knows neither of them,
Indifferent in his choice to sleep or die.”

At length the populace crying out, “ Take away the Atheists : let Polycarp be sought for ;” he was

* Relation of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp. † 1 John i. 7.

induced, by the intreaties of his people, to retire to a village at no great distance, where, with a few friends, he was engaged day and night in earnest supplication for the Church of Christ.

The venerable saint had now weathered many storms of persecution ; and might, perhaps, suppose that the same Providence that had so long preserved his valuable life, would also deliver him from this impending calamity, and finally remove him to Himself by the gradual decays of nature. But the days of man are numbered by a wise and gracious God, and the manner of his death over-ruled by the same Almighty Being. He was now nearly at the end of his pilgrimage, and was about to close a long and valuable life by an honourable martyrdom.

Three days previous to his death, Polycarp was favoured with a vision whilst engaged in prayer, in which it was figuratively represented to him, that he should be burnt alive. The place of his retreat was extorted from a young man of his household, and his enemies immediately afterwards entered his dwelling. As he was, however, at that time lying down in an upper room, connected with the flat roof of the house, he might still have possibly escaped them. But he now deemed it his duty no longer to avoid their scrutiny ; thinking that he could not give a nobler testimony to his uprightness and confidence in God, than by shewing to the world that these were a sufficient security to him in whatever dangers he might be

involved. No sooner, therefore, had he heard that his enemies were at hand than he calmly exclaimed, "The will of the Lord be done," and with a composed countenance entered into their presence.

The advanced age of Polycarp, and the sanctity of his appearance, sensibly impressed them. Some of them even said, "Surely it is not worth while to apprehend so old a man!" In the mean time, the martyr courteously ordered refreshment to be set before them; and, having obtained permission to engage in prayer, he stood in the midst of them, and prayed aloud with remarkable fervour and devotion for two successive hours. The spectators were astonished at the scene; and many of them repented that they were come to seize so divine a character.

As soon as he had ended his devotions, in which he had referred to the Church in general, and to various individuals that were personally known to him, his guards set him on an ass, and led him towards the city. Whilst on the road, they were met by Herod, the Irenarch, or keeper of the peace, and his father Nicetas, who took him into their chariot, and for some time, by promises and threatenings, endeavoured to induce him to sacrifice to the Heathen gods. Finding, at length, that he remained unmoved, they abused the good old man, and then cast him down from the chariot with such violence that his thigh was severely bruised by the fall. He, however, cheerfully went on with his

guards to the stadium, as though unhurt. As he was entering the assembly, a voice from heaven is said to have addressed him ;—" Be strong, Polycarp, and behave yourself like a man !" None saw the speaker ; but many that were present heard the voice. When he was brought before the tribunal, the proconsul, struck with his appearance, earnestly exhorted him to pity his advanced age, to swear by the fortune of Cæsar, and to say, " Away with the Atheists," a term of reproach then commonly attached to the Christians.* The

* " The world," remarks the writer of Mr. Patrick's Life, " has always had bad names for good things, as well as good names for bad things ; and, under this disguise—thin enough, indeed, yet sufficient for those who wish to be deceived—the true nature of both good and evil is conveniently veiled from sight. The effect of a name is wonderful ; and the great adversary of Christ's religion has shewn his subtilty in the ample use he has ever made of it. The name of Christian once served his purposes, as that of Pietist, Huguenot, Puritan, &c. afterwards did, and that of Methodist does now. The opprobrious epithet, —its currency once established, and its value known—becomes the convenient substitute of argument, truth, and reason ; and may be gratuitously applied, wherever it is designed to fix a stain, with a certainty of its accomplishing the end, and with equal ease and advantage to him who applies it :—with ease ; for what is easier than to call a bad name, the meaning of which not one person in a thousand will ever think it necessary to ask you ?—And with equal advantage as ease ; for what have the drunkards and swearers in any parish of this kingdom to do, when they begin to be disturbed in their sinful courses, but to call the preacher a Methodist ? And then, both in their own

saint, with his hand directed to the multitude, and his eyes lifted up to heaven, with a solemn countenance, said, "Away with the Atheists;" thereby intimating his fervent desire that true religion might prosper, and impiety be restrained. The proconsul still continued to urge him to apostatize. "Reproach Christ," said he, "and I will immediately release you." Fired with a holy indignation, the aged martyr replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath never wronged me; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour!" Being still urged to recant, he added, "If you affect ignorance of my real character, hear me plainly declare what I am.—*I am a Christian.*" "I have wild beasts:" said the proconsul, "I will expose you to them, unless you repent." "Call them," cried the martyr. "We, Christians, are determined in our minds not to change from good to evil." "I will tame your

opinion, and in that of all the world, they stand fairly excused for never minding more a word that he says."

We learn also, from Dean Hodgson's *Life of Bishop Porteus*, that the zeal and piety of that truly orthodox prelate subjected him to the "sweeping imputation of Methodism." "But," as Dean Hodgson observes, with no less truth than spirit, "he was not to be deterred from pursuing the calm determination of his own mind by any *calumny whatever*, and much less by the *stigma of a name*, a name devised by the enemies of religion for the worst purposes, and which, as generally used, attaches indiscriminately to the ignorant raving fanatic, and the sound, learned, pious, and orthodox divine."

spirit by fire," said the other, "since you despise the wild beasts, if you will not recant." "You threaten me with fire," answered Polycarp, "which burns for an hour; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly.—But why do you delay? Do what you please."

Firm and intrepid he stood before the council, not only contemning, but even desirous of death. In the mean time the proconsul was evidently embarrassed; but at length he sent a herald to proclaim thrice in the assembly, "Polycarp has professed himself a Christian."

At first the populace desired that a lion should be let out against him; but, as this could not then conveniently be done, as the shews of wild beasts were ended, they cried out with one voice, "Polycarp shall be burnt alive?" The sentence was executed with all possible speed; for the people immediately gathered fuel from the work-shops and baths, the poor infatuated Jews distinguishing themselves in this employment with peculiar malice. In the mean time the martyr cheerfully awaited his fate, fearing neither death, nor the horrible form in which it was now presented to him.

Every thing being at length prepared for burning him, the executioners were proceeding to nail him to the stake, when he exclaimed, "Let me remain as I am; for He who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without being

secured by nails, to remain unmoved in the fire." They, therefore, only bound him.

Polycarp then offered up the following prayer. " O Lord God Almighty, the Father of Thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have attained the knowledge of Thee ; the God of angels and principalities, and of every creature, and of all the just who live in Thy sight ! I bless Thee, that Thou hast vouchsafed to bring me to this day and this hour ; that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost ; among whom may I be accepted before Thee this day, as a sacrifice well savoured and acceptable, as Thou, the faithful and true God, hast ordained, promised, and art now fulfilling. Wherefore I praise Thee for all those things ; I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, by whom, and with whom, in the Holy Spirit, be glory to Thee both now and for ever. Amen."

It is probable that the ardent devotion which characterized the life of this eminent servant of God, and especially gilded the closing scene of his mortal existence, will, by a certain class of readers, be rather attributed to the extravagance of a heated imagination, than to the operation of the Spirit of God. The author trusts he will not be thought to step far out of his way, by introducing for their benefit the following observations, which will

not be read with less interest, or possess less weight, because written by the eloquent Robert Hall, and are not less appropriate to the subject of this life than to the person in reference to whom they were first made. "I am aware," says this able writer, "that some will object to the strain of devout ecstasy which characterises the sentiments and language of this eminent saint in his dying moments; but I am persuaded they will meet with nothing, however ecstatic and elevated, but what corresponds to the dictates of Scripture, and the analogy of faith. He who recollects that the Scriptures speak of a peace which passeth all understanding, and of a joy unspeakable and full of glory, will not be offended at the lively expressions of these contained in this narrative; he will be more disposed to lament the low state of his own religious feeling, than to suspect the propriety of sentiments the most rational and scriptural, merely because they rise to a pitch he has never reached. The sacred oracles afford no countenance to the supposition that devotional feelings are to be condemned as visionary and enthusiastic merely on account of their intenseness and elevation: provided they be of a right kind, and spring from legitimate sources, they never teach us to suspect they can be carried too far. David danced before the Lord with all his might; and, when he was reproached for degrading himself in the eyes of his people by indulging these transports, he replied, 'If this be to be vile, I will make myself

more vile.' That the objects which interest the heart in religion are infinitely more durable and important than all others, will not be disputed; and why should it be deemed irrational to be affected by them in a degree somewhat suitable to their value, especially in the near prospect of their full and perfect possession? Why should it be deemed strange and irrational for a dying saint, who has spent his life in the pursuit of immortal good, to feel an unspeakable ecstasy at finding he has just touched the goal, finished his course, and in a few moments is to be crowned with life everlasting? While he dwells on the inconceivably glorious prospect before him, and feels himself lost in wonder and gratitude, and almost opprest with a sense of his unutterable obligations to the love of his Creator and Redeemer, nothing can be more natural and proper than his sentiments and conduct. It affords no inconsiderable confirmation of the truth of Christianity, that the most celebrated sages of Pagan antiquity, whose last moments have been exhibited with inimitable propriety and beauty, present nothing equal, nor similar, nothing of that singular combination of humility and elevation, that self-renouncing greatness in which the creature appears annihilated, and God all in all. I am much mistaken if the serious reader will not find in the closing scenes of this eminent Christian's life the most perfect form of Christianity: he will find it, not, as it is too often, clouded with doubts, and oppressed with sorrows; he will behold it

ascend the mount, transfigured, glorified, and encircled with the beams of celestial majesty.”*

As soon as Polycarp had finished his prayer, the executioner lighted the fire, which blazed to a great height; and the flame, making a kind of arch, like the sail of a ship filled with wind, surrounded the body of the holy martyr. One of the executioners perceiving that his body was not burnt, plunged his sword into it, and then cast it down into the flames, where it was soon consumed. And now, like another Elijah, he ascended in a chariot of fire; but not without having first communicated a portion of his spirit to those around him.†

This venerable saint was martyred in the year of our Lord one hundred and sixty-seven,‡ and about the one hundred and twentieth year of his own age. Eleven Christians suffered with him.

As some of the brethren, who had witnessed the martyrdom of Polycarp, were gathering up his bones to bury them, the Jews, their inveterate enemies, suggested to the Heathen magistrates that the Christians wished to pay him Divine honors. Their own remark on the subject is important, as it shews that they worshipped the Lord Jesus

* Hall's Preface to the Life of Janeway.

† The author omits inserting an account of the insignificant miraculous circumstances which are said to have accompanied the martyrdom of Polycarp, but refers the reader to Dr. Jortin's very ingenious and satisfactory observations on this subject, in his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.

‡ Tillemont.

Christ, and also that an idolatrous veneration of departed saints, so awfully prevalent in latter times, was as yet unknown in Christendom. "It is not possible," they observed, "for us to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all who are saved of the human race, or ever to worship any other. We adore Him as being the Son of God; but we justly love the martyrs as disciples of the Lord, and for their distinguished affection to Him."*

Thus was the long protracted and useful life of this venerable saint at length terminated by martyrdom. Such appears to have been the serenity of his mind, that none of the accidents of life could discompose him; and such his Christian fortitude, that not even the severest punishments could unman him. Raised above the vicissitudes of this perishing world, he knew in whom he had believed, and was willing that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or death. In merely human acquisitions many have been his superiors; but in simplicity of character, apostolical zeal, love to the Saviour, and in every virtue that can adorn the life of a Christian, he shines resplendent,

"Velut inter ignes

Luna minores."

We conclude this account with our Lord's ad-

* Relation of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp.

dress to the angel, or bishop, of the Church at Smyrna, who was most probably none other than this holy martyr. If so, we may regard this short epistle as a Divine epitome of his history. The poverty and eminent piety of Polycarp—the grievous persecution of the Church at Smyrna, arising from the contrivance of Satan—the Jews persecuting and misrepresenting the Christians—and, perhaps, the martyrdom of Polycarp—are referred to in this epistle of our Lord.

“Unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write: These things saith the First, and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich); and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*

* Rev. ii. 8—10.

JUSTIN MARTYR.

CHAPTER I.

Justin's early attachment to study.—He travels to Alexandria.—Enquires into the different systems of philosophy.—His conversion to Christianity.

SIMPLICITY of faith, and literary attainments, are unhappily but seldom united in a very eminent degree in the same individual. The subjects of the preceding narratives were justly celebrated for genuine piety and extensive usefulness, but possessed no claim to the title of great divines or men of learning. As we proceed we shall find that their successors were far more distinguished as scholars, but at the same time were confessedly their inferiors in that genuine simplicity of piety, which constituted their peculiar honour.

Justin, surnamed the Martyr, was a native of Neapolis, a noted city in Samaria, anciently called Sichem. He was born about the sixth year of Trajan's reign, and about the year of our Lord

103.* He appears to have been the first writer, after those who are termed apostolical, that was eminent in the Church of Christ. His grandfather's name was Bacchius; and his father's Priscus. They were both Pagans: the latter is supposed by Scaliger to have been one of those Greeks who migrated into the above-mentioned colony.

By the desire of his father, who was exceedingly solicitous about his education, Justin was, at a very early period, instructed by suitable masters in the rudiments of Gentile philosophy. Thus favourably situated for the excitation of latent talent, we may reasonably suppose that the years of his childhood were distinguished by intimations of a superior mind, and that his fond parent cherished sanguine expectations of his future eminence.

After our young philosopher had made considerable progress in various branches of literature, he travelled into foreign parts for the improvement of his mind in knowledge, making observations upon every thing that appeared worthy of notice, and contracting acquaintance with the most celebrated scholars of the day. At length he came to Alexandria, a city at that time of no small renown in the literary world; and visited the cells, where the celebrated seventy translators performed their great and elaborate work. Interested with the

* Tillemont; whose chronology is followed in the *Life of Justin*.

various objects around him, Justin determined to take up his residence in this seat of learning, and proceeded to investigate in succession the different systems of philosophy which were then maintained. He soon, however, discovered that none could give him satisfactory information respecting the Deity, which was the chief object of his researches; though the Platonic system, which was the last he studied, appeared to him the most specious and attractive. During this period, as he himself afterwards mentioned, he was convinced, from the courage and constancy of the persecuted Christians, that they were not a profligate and debauched people; and that, consequently, the horrid charges brought against them were radically false. Still, however, he was bewildered amidst the intricate mazes of philosophy. He felt, indeed, a supreme reverence for the as yet "unknown God;" and his enquiry was, "O that I knew, where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat;"* but he had no one to take him by the hand, and lead him in a straight way to the knowledge of God. He was like a benighted traveller, not daring to stand still, yet fearing lest every step might remove him farther from the right road. The account he gives of this memorable period of his life, in his Dialogue with Trypho, is affecting and instructive. It points out the insufficiency of unassisted human wisdom to direct the soul to God, and clearly dis-

* Job xxiii. 3.

plays the excellence and satisfactory nature of that religion, of which he was afterwards so eminent a partaker.

Our author informs us, that he first applied to the Stoics, hoping that they were in possession of genuine philosophy; but finding that his master was not only unable to give him any information respecting the nature of God, but even professed to regard such knowledge as unimportant, he left him, and repaired for instruction to one of the Peripatetics. The sordid spirit, however, which this man manifested, in settling the price of his tuition, led Justin to conclude, that truth could not dwell with him. A Pythagorean next attracted his attention, who, requiring of him a previous knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry, dismissed him for the present, as he was unfurnished with these preparatory qualifications. At length he applied to a Platonic philosopher, was much struck with his intellectual notions, and resolved, according to the practice of that school, to give himself up to solitude and contemplation.

Adhering to these resolutions, Justin seemed likely to be established in the doctrines of his new master; when an unforeseen circumstance took place, which led to his conversion to Christianity. Whilst walking alone on a certain day, by the seaside, he met an aged person, of a most venerable appearance. They regarded each other with mutual attention, and soon entered into conversation. One question led to another, till at length Justin

referred to the pleasure he took in private meditation ; and, on the stranger's hinting at the absurdity of expecting satisfaction in his soul from merely abstract reasonings, he declared, that his earnest desire was to arrive at the knowledge of God, and then proceeded to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The venerable stranger then took occasion to shew, that he attached too much importance to the sentiments of Plato and Pythagoras, and at length recommended him to read the writings of the Old Testament prophets, as more ancient, and infinitely wiser, than all the works of Heathen philosophers. He then unfolded to him some of the evidences and leading doctrines of Christianity, and concluded his discourse with this truly important advice :—" Above all things, pray, that the gates of light may be opened to you ; for these things cannot be discerned or understood by any man, except God and His Christ impart to him the knowledge of them."

That this Divine illumination is absolutely necessary to enable a person properly to understand and relish real godliness, is declared in various passages of the Sacred Writings, and especially in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. " The natural man," says he, " receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

The venerable stranger having finished his discourse, immediately departed, and was never after seen by Justin. His words, however, made a deep and abiding impression on his mind. "A Divine flame," he remarks, "was immediately kindled in my soul, and I felt a sincere affection for those prophets and excellent persons who were the friends of Christ." From this period he carefully read the Scriptures, felt an increasing interest in their important contents, and in due time experienced that genuine consolation which Christianity alone can confer on the troubled mind.

In the mean time we may reasonably suppose, that some experienced Christians, the counterpart of Aquila and Priscilla, would take him to their house, and expound unto him the way of God more perfectly. They saw him, like the noble Æthiopian, going on his way, diligently reading the Scriptures; and, justly estimating the value of his character, ran to join themselves to his chariot; while he, intent to learn their true meaning, stood still to hear; and, having received the truth as God was pleased to teach it, he afterwards went on his way rejoicing.*

* Mr. Cecil, in his *Life of Cadogan*, makes a nearly similar allusion to the story of the eunuch. His memoirs of the just mentioned clergyman, as well as of the artist, Bacon, like the narratives of this volume, are somewhat barren of incident; but manifest such discrimination of character, and abound with such important observations, as cannot fail to render them most entertaining and profitable to every attentive reader.

To use Justin's own expressions, he "found Christianity to have a formidable majesty in its nature, admirably adapted to terrify those who are in the way of transgression, as well as a sweetness, peace, and serenity, for those who are acquainted with it." He also perceived that the best philosophers had enriched themselves with garbled extracts from the Sacred Writings, and that a poor Christian, who could not distinguish a letter, could talk more sensibly respecting the Divine nature, than even Plato himself. At the same time the calmness and patience of Christians under the most dreadful persecutions, which had previously engaged his attention, confirmed his faith in the truth of Christianity: for Alexandria, and almost every country, where the religion of the Redeemer was known, was polluted with the blood of the martyrs.

A wonderful and blessed revolution was now produced in the character of this celebrated man. His head and his heart were equally convinced and affected; and the whole of his subsequent life manifested the sincerity and solidity of his conversion. We may apply to him, at this period of his life, the following description of the late eminently holy vicar of Madeley: "Conviction made way for unfeigned repentance, and repentance laid a solid foundation for Christian piety. His sorrow for sin was succeeded by a consciousness of the Almighty's favour; and the pangs of remorse gave way to the joys of remission. Believing on Jesus, as the

Scripture hath said, he found in Him a well of consolation springing up into everlasting life. All his wanderings were at once terminated, his doubts were removed, his tears were dried up, and he began to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. His conversion was not imaginary, but real. It not only influenced his sentiments, but extended to his conduct. Whom he had found as a Saviour, he determined to follow as a Guide: and so unalterable was this determination that from the very hour in which it was formed it is not known that he ever cast a wishful look behind him.' '*

Justin embraced Christianity in the year of our Lord 133, being about thirty years of age.

* Gilpin's Notes to Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul. A considerable part of these Notes are now embodied by the Rev. J. Benson, in his *Life of Mr. Fletcher*.

CHAPTER II.

Justin writes his Exhortation to the Gentiles.—Retains his love for philosophy.—The Platonic notion of the Trinity.—Justin vindicated from Platonizing on the essential doctrines of Christianity.

THE writings of the preceding fathers were not only destitute of literary ornament, but also confined to the Christian communities to which they were addressed. A wider field is now opening to our view. The subject of the present narrative has the honour of being the first writer, of those whose works have escaped the ravages of time,* who entered the lists against the professed enemies of the Church, and attempted to diffuse a colouring of elegance over the hitherto unadorned doctrines of Christianity. What Dr. Johnson says, respecting Dr. Watts, in reference to the Dissenters, may, with still greater propriety, be applied to Justin Martyr, with regard to the primitive Christians. “He was one of the first authors that taught them to court attention by the graces of language. Whatever they had among them before, whether

* Quadratus and Aristides presented Apologies for the Christian religion to the emperor Adrian. But both their works have long since been lost, except a short fragment of the Apology of Quadratus concerning the miracles of our Saviour.

of learning or acuteness, was commonly obscured and blunted by coarseness and inelegance of style. He shewed them that zeal and purity might be expressed and enforced by polished diction.”*

The secession of the philosophical Justin from the cause of Paganism excited no little astonishment and indignation in the minds of his late literary associates. But he was not to be shaken from his principles, either by their reproaches, or threatenings. After the deliberate exercise of his judgment he had cordially embraced the religion of a despised Master, and was now prepared to sacrifice every worldly consideration, or even lay down his life, in its defence.

His first employment was to compose his “Exhortation to the Greeks or Gentiles;” in which he ably vindicates his conduct in embracing Christianity; and contrasts the absurdity and falsehood of their religion with the truth and excellency of the one which he had now embraced. He declares he had abandoned Paganism, because there was nothing in it really sacred and worthy of a Divine original. He proceeds to expose, in animated language, the vices of their deities, and the consequent impurity of Pagan morals; and then earnestly exhorts them to be instructed in the Christian religion. “How can you,” he enquires, “being a worshipper of Jupiter and Venus, blame your son for rebellion, or your wife for incontinence?”

* Johnson’s Life of Watts.

Come hither, O ye Greeks, and submit yourselves to the dictates of incomparable wisdom, and of an immortal King, who regards not strength nor beauty, nor the pride of noble birth, but a pure heart established in holiness. The uniform habit of the followers of the Gospel is goodness; and its trumpet a note of peace to the perturbed soul. Its blessed discipline quenches and allays the passions, those fires of the mind; and thus forms, not indeed poets, or philosophers, or powerful orators, but makes men immortal, resembling God."

Justin, though now ostensibly the Christian advocate, still wore the usual dress of a Heathen philosopher, and retained no small relish for his former studies.* This very circumstance had a natural tendency to make him think too highly of celebrated Pagans, whom he represented as a sort of Christians; and by his attempting to amalgamate their sentiments with those of Christianity, in some measure to obscure his views of Divine truth; though the soundness of his mind on the essential points of our holy religion is indubitable. After all, justice, candour, and religion, require us cheerfully to trace every virtue, whether found in a Christian or a Pagan, to the same Divine source; gratefully to acknowledge that the mercies of God are over all His works; and charitably to hope

* Φιλοσοφῶν καὶ τοῖς λόγοις, καὶ τῷ βίῳ, καὶ τῷ σχήματι.—

Photius.

that the Almighty, by the secret operations of His Spirit, not unfrequently conveys to a Heathen's heart some faint impressions of those Divine truths, which, of His infinite mercy, He has been pleased plainly to reveal to us in the written Word.

Mr. Reeves, the learned translator of Justin's Apology, fully justifies him from the charge of Platonizing on the subject of the Logos: but his vindication itself seems to imply, that the Christianity of Justin was not altogether free from the unhallowed mixture of Gentile philosophy.

“ Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem
Testa diu.”

Dr. Jortin's summary of the opinions held by the followers of Plato on these important subjects may here be properly introduced, before we proceed to consider Mr. Reeves's vindication of the subject of this narrative. “ The Platonic philosophers,” remarks Dr. Jortin, “ when they considered the visible, and vital, and intellectual system, found that, besides sluggish and inanimate matter, which has a shadowy being, and is a small remove above nothing, there existed in the Universe *life and active power*; above that, *reason, understanding, wisdom*; above that, *goodness*, above which there could be no imaginable perfection. The same things they found in every man who acts

according to his nature, namely, *life, reason, and goodness*. Tracing effects up to their causes, above all other beings they placed as principles a *Ψυχη*, above that a *Λογος*, and above both a *Το Εν και Αγαθον*. These notions the Platonists ascribed to their master; but it must be confessed that Plato talks very obscurely upon the subject.

“The emperor Julian,” he continues, “who rejected Christ did not reject the notion of a Logos. His Logos was *the Sun*, whom he accounted to be the visible image of the invisible God, whilst he perversely shut his eyes against the *Sun of righteousness*, that arose on a benighted world with salvation in His rays.”*

The preceding summary of genuine Platonism will enable the reader to form a more accurate idea of the following quotation from Reeves in vindication of Justin. “When I read the manner of his conversion, and hear the good old guide saying what little deference he had for his admired sages, Plato and Pythagoras, and sending him to the Scriptures only for instruction; when I see the martyr all on fire with this Divine philosophy, and his passion for earthly wisdom quite extinguished by this heavenly light, and confessing that the Christian was the only philosopher; when again I hear him complain of the lamentable reasonings and wretched inconsistencies of the human brain.

* Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.

and that nothing is to be depended on but the divinely inspired Writings ; when I hear him say in his second Apology that the doctrines of Plato are not alien to those of Christ ; and withal affirming in this, that Plato had all his divinity from Moses and the Prophets ; when I find this Christian philosopher thus emptying himself of all his former notions, and clearing his mind of that learned lumber, I cannot but think that the martyr has hard usage, after all this self-denial, to be still charged with indulging his fancy, and Platonizing even in the great articles of the Christian faith. Reason good, indeed, that Daniel Zuicker and his brethren should thus charge him ; for Justin has too frequently, and too expressly, asserted the divinity of the Logos, and the prophetic Spirit ; and, therefore, as ever they hope to be credited, they must be sure to blast his authority, and make him introduce the Trinity, not from the Scriptures, but the schools ; though the notorious difference between Plato and Justin in this very mystery is in itself sufficient to justify him from Platonizing in fundamentals, if his sincerity is not.

“ With as good reason,” he proceeds, “ is St. Justin thus taxed by these heretics, as St. John was by the Platonist Amelius, who, upon reading the first verses of his Gospel, cried out, ‘ Per Jovem barbarus iste cum Platone nostro sentit—By Jove this barbarian has been shirking from our master Plato.’ Thus we have St. John

himself charged with Platonizing, because he has too positively asserted the divinity of Christ; and, consequently, the Holy Ghost that inspired him is by this same author accused of philosophizing from a Heathen, in an article that passes all understanding. But it is the glory of Justin to be traduced by such men, as will not stick to traduce an apostle.*

* Reeves's Preliminary Discourse.

CHAPTER III.

Justin writes his book against heresies.—The calumnies propagated against the Christians.—Justin writes his Apology.—Refers to the Sibylline Oracles.—Relates the manner of the Christians conducting their public worship.—The emperor Pius's edict in favour of the Christians.

IN the early part of the reign of Antoninus Pius, and about six years after his own conversion to Christianity, Justin visited Rome.* During his residence in this celebrated city, he wrote his book against heresies; in which he especially opposed the blasphemous errors of Marcion. This heretic was the son of a bishop, and a native of Pontus. He is said to have been rejected from the Church for impurity, and to have fled to Rome, where he published doctrines of an Antinomian tendency. Justin, well aware of the holy nature of genuine Christianity, and of the importance of its being cleared from the aspersions of false friends, as well as from the cavils of professed enemies, ably combated the heretic both in conversation, and by his writings.

About the year 150, Justin wrote his first Apo-

* A. D. 139.

logy for the Christians, in refutation of the dreadful calumnies which were currently reported against them. Amongst other enormities, they were accused of committing the grossest intemperance,—of devouring infants,—and, at an appointed time, of extinguishing the lights in their places of worship, that they might indulge themselves without restraint in incest, and a promiscuous intercourse of the sexes.

“ It is no improbable supposition,” remarks a learned modern Apologist, “ that the clandestine manner in which the persecuting spirit of the Jews and Gentiles obliged the Christians to celebrate their Eucharist, together with the expressions of eating the body, and drinking the blood of Christ, which were used in its institution, and the custom of imparting a kiss of charity to each other, and of calling each other by the appellations of brother and sister, gave occasions to their enemies to invent, and induced careless observers to believe, all the odious things which were said against the Christians.”*

Scurrilous reports, when once currently circulated, are with difficulty suppressed. The malice of bad men, and the credulity of weak men, are alike instrumental in preserving them in existence. By these glaring misrepresentations the rage of the Heathens was for a time inflamed to the utmost against the Christian name, and a handle was

* Bishop Watson's Apology for Christianity.

afforded for the most barbarous treatment of the best of men. Time, however, at length detected the falsehood of these accusations; and all who made any pretensions to candour became, at last, ashamed of affecting to believe a charge which was equally devoid of probability, and destitute of evidence.

In his Apology Justin proves the Divine origin of the religion of the Christians, completely repels the horrid charges brought against them, describes their mode of worship, and evinces its purity and simplicity. A few extracts from this interesting work will probably not be unacceptable to the reader.

Having addressed his book to Antoninus and his adopted sons, our Apologist intimates that those dignified persons, who bore the titles of "Pious, Philosophers, Guardians of Justice and Learning," should embrace truth for its own sake, and discard errors, however sanctioned by custom. He afterwards proceeds;—"We are called Atheists; and, indeed, as it respects your false gods, we confess the charge; but we acknowledge the true God, the Father of righteousness, purity, and every virtue, who is infinitely removed from any mixture of evil. Him, together with the Son and the prophetic Spirit, we reverence and adore with the worship of truth and reason."

Shortly after, referring to the injustice of punishing them merely for their profession of Christianity, Justin observes, with equal force and pro-

priety; " All that we request is, that those who are indicted by the name of Christians may obtain a fair trial. If they are convicted of any crime, let them be punished, but not as *Christians* : if they are innocent, let them be discharged, as Christians who have done nothing amiss. We do not desire you to punish our calumniators ; their own wickedness, and ignorance of what is good, is punishment enough."

Our author afterwards describes the wonderful and blessed change which had been produced in numbers of persons since they had embraced the Christian religion. " We, who formerly delighted in impurity, have now embraced a life of the strictest chastity. We, who once used magic arts, now consecrate ourselves to the uncreated God. We, who formerly loved riches above all things, now have our possessions in common, and liberally provide for the indigent. We, who formerly hated, and even destroyed, our fellow-creatures, and would not perform the common offices of hospitality for those of a different tribe, now, since the appearance of Christ, live cordially together, and join in earnest prayer for our enemies. Those who unjustly hate us, we endeavour, by the gentlest persuasives, to convert, that they, fashioning their lives by the holy precepts of Christ, may possess the same comfortable hope of enjoying the like happiness with ourselves.

" A Christian must not lift up his hand in resistance, nor imitate the tyranny of the wicked,

but endeavour, by patience and meekness, to convert his enemies from violence and wrong. And numerous are the instances we could exhibit of the powerful effects produced by such conduct. Many have been converted from violence and oppression, by observing the patience of their Christian neighbours, or the meekness of such as they chanced to travel with, or their honesty and fidelity in all their transactions."

These are most satisfactory and pleasing evidences of the continuance and beneficial effects of vital religion in the time of Justin. A man, who called himself a Christian, but did not produce the genuine fruits of piety, would, in those days, have scarcely been classed among the brethren.

An old writer of our own country makes the following appropriate remark on the preceding extract:—"The King of Heaven came down, to instruct the world in the laws of a heavenly conversation, which He has proposed in a way of conflict, quite contrary to that in the Olympic games. *There* he that fights and conquers wins the garland: *here*, he that is beaten, and bears it with patience, receives the crown: *there*, he that is smitten, and returns blow for blow; *here*, he that turns the other cheek, is celebrated the victor, in the Theatre of Angels; for the Christian victory is measured, not by revenge, but patience. This is the new law of crowns; this is the new way of conflict and contention!"

In one part of his Apology Justin refers to the Sibylline Oracles, as confirming the truth of the Christian religion. In the use of this reference he is unhappy, because these oracles have long been considered of very questionable authority, and are now pretty generally deemed no other than *pious frauds*.* This very circumstance may suggest a salutary caution to those who are inclined to support the cause of truth by precarious or exceptionable evidence. For though the detection

* “ We may take a general account,” remarks Dr. Lardner, “ of this collection of pretended oracles in the words of Mr. Turner. ‘ We there find,’ says he, ‘ an account of the creation of the world, the fall of our first parents, the ark of Noah, the deluge of waters, the tower of Babel, and other matters, all undoubtedly taken from the book of Genesis. The historical books of the New Testament have also furnished the forger of these oracles with several pretended prophecies concerning our Saviour. The manner of our Lord’s nativity, His life and actions, His trial and sufferings, His resurrection and ascension, are described with much plainness and particularity: which makes it more than probable that several of those oracles, relating to our blessed Saviour, are not predictions of future events, but historical narrations of facts that were already past and gone. The author, in order to disguise the imposture, is somewhat enigmatical in his account of the Roman emperors. He describes them all, from Julius to Adrian, chiefly by the initial letters of their names.’ So far Mr. Turner. But the author has made use of more than one artifice to disguise the imposture. It may be justly supposed, that with this view he inserted in his work several things taken from the ancient Heathen oracles, and from Orpheus, Homer, and other poets.”
—Credibility of the Gospel History.

of fallacy, in the reasonings of persons endeavouring to defend Christianity, leaves our holy religion on precisely the same foundation as it stood before; yet, to a prejudiced or careless observer, the unsoundness of some particular ground of supposed evidence may be misconceived as a weakness in the cause it is alleged to support; just as the falling of an useless buttress might be mistaken as a symptom of decay in the whole structure.

We must not, however, for a moment suppose that our Apologist was either the forger of these pretended oracles, or conscious of the imposture. "Justin has written his own character," observes a celebrated ecclesiastical critic, "in every page of his works; and shews himself pious, warm, sprightly, fearless, open, hasty, honest, inquisitive, sincere, and as void of dissimulation and hypocrisy as a child."*

Nearly at the conclusion of his Apology we meet with an interesting detail of the manner in which the Lord's supper was administered, and their religious assemblies in general conducted. "At every celebration of the Eucharist," he remarks, "we bless the Creator of all things, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit. And upon the day called Sunday, all that live either in the city, or in the country, meet together in one place, when so much of the writings of the apostles and prophets are read as

* Justin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.

time will allow. When the reader has ceased, the president * makes a discourse for the purpose of edifying the people, and animating them to the practise of such things as are excellent. When the sermon is ended, we all rise up and pour out our supplications. The bread, and wine mixed with water, are then carried round ; the president, as before, offering up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the people replying with an audible ‘ Amen.’ Then the consecrated elements are partaken of by all that are present, and sent to the absent by the hands of the deacons. Contributions are at the same time deposited with the president, who relieves, with this fund of voluntary charity, orphans and widows, the sick, the needy, captives and strangers, together with all who are in want.”

This Apology, which was presented to the emperor Antoninus Pius, appears to have had a considerable influence on his future conduct towards the Christians. Though himself criminally indifferent to religious truth, he was, nevertheless, a man of sense and humanity, and was anxious to do justice to all his subjects. He, therefore, bore an honourable testimony to the moral character of the Christians ; and issued an edict, declaring that if any of them for the future should be accused merely of being Christians, *they* should be acquitted, and *their accusers* punished. This edict

* ΠΡΟΕΣΥΣ.

is annexed to Justin's Apology, and is well worthy of being introduced in this place.

THE EPISTLE OF ANTONINUS TO THE COMMON
COUNCIL OF ASIA.

“The Emperor Cæsar Titus Ælius Adrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, chief pontiff, the fifteenth time tribune, thrice consul, father of the country, to the common assembly of Asia, greeting.—I am of opinion, that the gods will take care that such persons shall not escape ; for it is much more their concern than your's, to punish, if they be able, those who refuse to worship them. Nevertheless, you harass and vex the Christians, and accuse them of Atheism ; and bring other charges against them, which you are utterly unable to substantiate. In the mean time, they deem it an advantage to die for their religion ; and, while they lay down their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions, they obtain the object of their desire. As to the earthquakes, which happened some time since, or more recently, is it not proper to remind you of your own despondency during the occasion, and to desire you to compare your spirit with their's, and observe how serenely they confided in God ? Whereas in these seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and to neglect their worship. You live in the practical ignorance of the supreme God

Himself, and harass and persecute to death those who do worship Him. Some of the provincial governors wrote to our Divine father Adrian, respecting these very people; and he replied, that they should not be molested, except for crimes against the Roman government. Several persons, also, have informed me concerning them, to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to that of my father. But if any one will still persist in accusing the Christians, *merely as such*, let the person accused be discharged, even though it appear that he is a Christian; and let the informer be punished in his stead."

Whilst we admire the amiable character of this emperor, and the justice of his sentence and conduct, respecting the Christians, we cannot but regret that he never seriously studied the Gospel for himself. "A sceptical carelessness and indifference," remarks an ecclesiastical writer, "not unlike that temper which, under the names of candour and moderation, has now overspread the face of Europe, appears to have possessed the mind of this amiable prince: and while he attended to the temporal advantages of mankind, and felicitated himself on his good actions, he seemed to forget that he had a soul accountable to the Supreme Being; and scarce to think it possible that it should have any guilt to answer for before Him. The evil of such a contempt of God is what mankind are, of all things, least inclined to discern:

Yet it is the evil, of all others, the most vehemently opposed in Scripture under the several branches of idolatry, unbelief, self-righteousness, and pride. No wonder ; for, without a knowledge of this evil, and a humble sense of guilt in consequence, the very nature of the Gospel itself cannot be understood. The conclusion resulting from this consideration is, that godliness is perfectly distinct from mere morality. The latter, indeed, always flourishes where godliness is ; but it is capable of a separate existence.”*

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

Justin holds a disputation with Trypho, a Jew.—The emperor Aurelius persecutes the Christians.

There is always, it has been remarked, this advantage in contending with illustrious adversaries, that the combatant is equally immortalized by conquest or defeat. The truth of this observation was exemplified in the case of Trypho, the Jew, whose name, it is probable, would never have reached our time, had it not been connected with that of our illustrious Christian Apologist.

Not long after the promulgation of the emperor's edict, Justin again travelled into the East, anxious to make new converts to the faith, and to confirm the minds of those who had already embraced it. Coming at length to Ephesus, and walking one morning in the Xystum, he met a Jew, named Trypho, who, mistaking him, in consequence of his dress, for a Gentile philosopher, expressed a desire to enter into conversation with him. Justin, observing by whom he was addressed, expressed his surprise, that one who was in possession of the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets, should pay any attention to a Greek philosopher; and then proceeded to inform him, how he had studied various systems of philosophy, but found

no true satisfaction, nor peace of mind, till he at length embraced the Christian religion. On his saying this the companions of Trypho burst out into a fit of laughter, and Trypho asserted, that it would have been better for Justin to have retained his attachment to the philosophy of Plato, or to that of any other master, than thus permit himself to be deceived by the falsehoods of the vilest men. “ If, however,” he continued, “ you will hearken unto me ;—and I advise you as a friend,—in the first place, be circumcised, keep our sabbaths, festivals, new moons, and other rites, prescribed by the law ; and then you may expect mercy from God. But as for Christ, if, indeed, there be such a person, He is very little known, and, in fact, does not seem to know Himself ; nor is it possible He should possess any power, until Elias come to anoint Him, and bring Him into notice. You Christians have credited some ill-authenticated report, and formed for yourselves an ideal Saviour, for the sake of whom you are inconsiderately sacrificing all the comforts of life.”

Undaunted by the reception he met with, our Apologist undertook to demonstrate the truth and excellency of his religion, provided Trypho’s companions would either retire, or remain in silence. In consequence of this declaration, four of them promised to be attentive hearers ; and the rest, ridiculing every enquiry on the subject, departed. Justin and his Jewish opponent then proceeded to the Stadium, and commenced their disputation,

which, being interrupted by the night, was renewed on the following day. The substance of their disputation was afterwards published by Justin. As, in his former treatise, he exposed the errors of Paganism, and vindicated the purity of the Christian faith ; so in the present dialogue, he directs a similar train of argument against Judaism. Thus Justin had the honour of being the first Christian combatant who engaged in a warfare, both with Jews and heretics. Having refuted, in this contest, the erroneous notions held by the Jews respecting the law, he shews that sin can alone be expiated by the atoning blood of Christ, whom he represents as the proper object of adoration, and styles him “ Very God, the Son of the uncreated God, Lord and Christ, God of God.”

Justin afterwards illustrates the wonderful increase of the Christians, under dreadful persecutions, by the following beautiful and appropriate simile:—“ We are slain with the sword, we are crucified, we are cast to the wild beasts, we are bound with chains, tortured, and burned, and yet we depart not from our profession ; the more we are persecuted, the more believing worshippers are added to our numbers. As a vine, by being pruned and cut close, puts forth new shoots, and bears a greater abundance of fruit ; so is it with us who are the vine which God and His Christ have planted.”

In another place, he thus states the sentiments,

which were then generally adopted by the Christians, respecting the Millennium. Having referred to the errors of the Valentinians and Gnostics, he remarks ;—" As for me, and the rest of us, who are orthodox in our opinions, and who are perfectly Christians, we know that there shall be both a resurrection of the flesh, and that the saints shall afterwards also spend a thousand years in Jerusalem, which shall be rebuilt, beautified, and enlarged."

Justin at length concludes his dialogue, by earnestly exhorting Trypho and his friends to turn to God, through the mediation of the Messiah. " O, my brethren," says he, " be persuaded no longer to revile Christ crucified, or deride His stripes, by which all may be healed." Shortly after, he adds, " Christ came in the power of the Omnipotent Father, proclaiming friendship, and blessing, and repentance, and the communion of saints. Hence all men, whether bond or free, who believe in Christ, and His promises, may enjoy with Him an eternal and incorruptible inheritance."

One more passage is here inserted, as a contrast to the former. " It was foretold," says Justin, " that the children of Abraham should be as *the sand of the sea-shore* ; and so indeed you are ; if as numerous, as barren, likewise, and as unfruitful of all that is good, ever ready to receive the refreshing dews and rains of heaven, and never willing and disposed to make any return."

Perhaps it may be thought, that there is a keenness in the last remark, which would better have been exchanged for that spirit, which the apostle felt, when he exclaimed, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." But neither the raillery, nor the arguments, of Justin were unsuccessful: the one silenced his Jewish combatant, and the other confounded, if it did not convince him. Trypho acknowledged, that there was considerable weight in his observations, expressed a wish that he might frequently enjoy the pleasure of his conversation, and ever afterwards retained a veneration for his character.

The security which the Christians enjoyed, in consequence of the edict of Antoninus Pius, ceased with his reign. As soon as Aurelius ascended the throne, accusations were again brought forward against them, and great numbers of them were delivered to the executioner. In the mean time, this cruel philosophical emperor, without actually repealing the laws either of Trajan or Pius, adopted such inhuman measures against the Christians as would have been unjustifiable against the most barbarous enemies. He passed an edict, by which the property of the Christians was adjudged to the persons who convicted them of Atheism, or unnatural crimes. Hence the most shameless charac-

ters, and those who coveted their possessions,* were invited to accuse the Christians, and hunt them out by night and by day. We must shudder, while we reflect on their miserable and defenceless state during the reign of this imperial persecutor.

No public search, indeed, was made after believers, for that would have been contrary to the edict of Trajan ; nor were they accused merely of being Christians, for that was forbidden by the more recent edict of Antoninus Pius. But, to accomplish the bloody designs of their enemies, they were condemned on the mere testimony of slaves, and the very refuse of mankind, for crimes improbable in their very nature, and which the most excruciating tortures could not make them confess. To complete the horrors of the transaction, all was done under the pretence of zeal for the cause of morality. Of such flagrant hypocrisy is the human heart capable, that there is no sin, however base, which it will not adorn with a reputable title !

In a short time, indeed, the profession of Christianity, and the commission of abominable crimes, were pretended, by their enemies, to be so inseparably connected, that, if they could merely ascertain the former, they scrupled not to condemn them as guilty of the latter. A little knowledge of human nature, and of the Scriptures, will enable any one to explain the true motives of all this oppo-

* *Των αλλοτριων αρασαι*—Melito's Apology.

sition to the Christians and their religion. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And adversaries in every age have manifested their enmity against God and His people, by applying to the latter reproachful names, and misrepresenting their religious sentiments and conduct.

A modern writer has referred, with not less propriety than force, to the injury which religion sustains in the present day, by the application of an unmeaning, but invidious, term of reproach to its consistent votaries. "The forges of the Philistines," he observes, "never sharpened a weapon of more destructive effect against the people of God. It has a magical irresistible force, independent of the hand which employs it. Women and children, and beaux and apprentices, are sturdy polemics with this weapon in their hands; and victorious over truth, and reason, and Scripture. Has any man the fear, or hope, of what is to happen to him hereafter present to his thoughts, and impressed on his behaviour; has he the boldness to maintain the character of a Christian, and to carry the injunctions of Christianity into the practice of life, with whatever sobriety, consistency, and modesty—call him but a Methodist, and every fat 'unthinking face brightens into malicious meaning;' a shade at once envelopes every virtue which belongs to him; and every profligate fool, that listens to the charge, exults in the contrast between himself and the hypocrite.

"While Religion," he continues, "preserves

that distance which her enemies would assign to her; while she languishes in her sabbath of secluded ease, or confines herself, within the porch and the academy, to fruitless speculation, without venturing her footsteps on the threshold of social life, she may live unmolested in a sort of holy suffering; but if she descends into the busy walks of men, if she crosses the paths of pleasure, if she casts her bitters into the chalice of debauchery, or frowns upon the licentious levities of the tongue, the dread of her interference, like the alarm of invasion, unites the mass against her, and every voice is raised in unison to brand her with Methodism, saintship, and hypocrisy. When shall we have a truce from this stupidest of all cants, this most childish and mischievous nonsense? Not certainly until the well-born and well-educated will learn to distinguish between rational piety and raving zeal, between a religious life and the shallow pretence of religion; and leave to vulgar witlings the dangerous and intolerant practice of charging with hypocrisy every characteristic of devotion, and assuming, as the test of a schismatic departure from our Church, that practical holiness of life which is the specific result of its doctrines."*

* British Review, Vol. I. p. 341.

CHAPTER V.

Justin disputes with Crescens, a Cynic philosopher.—Writes his second Apology.—Is summoned before the prefect.—His martyrdom.—His character.

In the year 162, at the commencement of this persecution of Aurelius, Justin engaged in controversy with one Crescens, a Cynic philosopher, who, though arrogant and overbearing, and a slave to the vilest passions, was at that time in high repute at Rome. This man, in his eager pursuit of popularity, had endeavoured, by the vilest arts of insinuation, to misrepresent the Christian religion. Our Apologist, with his usual acuteness, exposed his ignorance and malevolence, and refuted him in several public disputations.

Not long after, in consequence of the persecution becoming more general, Justin composed his second Apology, and presented it to the emperor Aurelius, as he had done the former to his predecessor, Antoninus Pius. We learn, from the work itself, that the following circumstance was the immediate cause of his writing it, and that the Christians were now persecuted as such, without any attempt being made to establish any other accusation against them. A certain woman, at Rome, who, together with her husband, had lived

in a very profligate and licentious manner, being converted to Christianity, used her utmost efforts to reclaim her husband from his vicious courses. The man, however, resisted all her importunities; and his conduct at length became so intolerable, that she procured a bill of divorce. Enraged by this measure, he accused her of being a Christian; and upon her obtaining from the emperor a postponement of her trial, he abandoned the prosecution of his wife, and brought an accusation against Ptolemy, by whom she had been instructed in Christianity. Ptolemy, having confessed himself to be a Christian, was thrown into prison and cruelly tortured; and afterwards was condemned to suffer death by Urbicius, the prefect. A Christian, named Lucius, who was present, expostulated with Urbicius, on the absurdity of these proceedings, as well as the iniquity of putting men to death, merely for a name, abstracted from any one specific charge of guilt. "You, too, appear to me to be of the same sect," was all that the prefect deigned to reply. Lucius, confessing that he was indeed a Christian, was condemned, together with a third person, who in like manner had avowed his religion, to undergo the same punishment.

These outrageous proceedings induced Justin to write his second Apology; in which, after stating the above case, he complains of the injustice of punishing men merely for the name of Christians, and refutes the calumnious reports, which were again studiously circulated against them.

If Justin, however, hoped to soften the heart of the present emperor towards the Christians, as he had that of his predecessor, he was disappointed. Aurelius continued an implacable enemy to them; persisted in attributing their patience and heroic resolution to inveterate obstinacy, and despised alike the arguments and the philosophic garb of Justin; though he especially prided himself on his own philosophical attainments, and, on other occasions, manifested the greatest reverence for men of learning.

Under these circumstances, it was no difficult matter for Crescens, who had been exceedingly incensed by the irresistible force of Justin's arguments, and still more by his reproofs of his profligacy, to render him obnoxious to the emperor. Justin, indeed, had intimated, in his last Apology, that he expected that Crescens, or some other pretended philosopher, would lay snares for his ruin; and he was not mistaken in his surmises. By the contrivance of this inveterate enemy he was thrown into prison; and, after undergoing there many preparatory tortures, he, and six of his companions, were summoned to appear before Junius Rusticus, the prefect of the city.

Rusticus was a man greatly celebrated for learning and political wisdom, and for his attachment to Stoicism. He had formerly been tutor to the emperor, who always entertained the highest veneration for his instructions, especially those of a moral nature, and consulted him on all affairs, whether

of a public or private description. But what covering were these wretched fig-leaves of morality, whilst the tutor and his royal pupil were not clothed with the garments of salvation, but remained the enemies of God and His Christ!

At first the prefect attempted to persuade Justin to obey the gods, and comply with the emperor's commands. The martyr refused; and proceeded to defend the reasonableness of his religion. The prefect then enquired respecting his education; and was told, that he had studied all kinds of philosophy and learning, but, obtaining satisfaction from none of them, he at last had found rest in the Christian doctrine, however fashionable it might then be to despise it.

“Wretch!” replied the indignant prefect, “art thou captivated by *that religion*?” “I am,” said Justin. “I follow the Christians; and their doctrine is right.” “What is their doctrine?” enquired Rusticus. “It is this,” rejoined the martyr: “we believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things, visible and invisible; and we confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, foretold by the ancient prophets: He is now the Saviour and Teacher of all those who humbly submit to His instructions;—and He will hereafter be the Judge of mankind. As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming His infinite Deity. This was the employment of the prophets, who, many ages ago, foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world.” The prefect

then asked, where the Christians usually assembled. To which it was replied, that the God of Christians was not confined to any particular place.

Rusticus then severally examined his companions; and afterwards again addressed Justin: "Hear thou, who art celebrated for thy eloquence, and imaginest thyself to be in possession of the truth, dost thou suppose, if I cause thee to be scourged from head to foot, that thou shalt go to heaven?" "Although I suffer what you threaten," firmly replied the martyr, "yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true believers; as I know that the Divine grace and favour are laid up for all such, and shall be so while the world endures." "Do you think, then," enquired the prefect, "that you shall go to heaven, and receive a reward?" "I not only think so," he rejoined, "but I *know* it; and have a certainty of it, which excludes all doubt."

The prefect still insisted on their sacrificing to the gods; and, at the same time, threatened to torment them without mercy, unless they complied. "There is nothing we more sincerely desire," exclaimed Justin, "than to endure tortures for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be saved. For this will promote our happiness, and give us confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which God hath appointed the whole world to appear."

How animating and glorious are the prospects

of real believers, who, like Justin, live up to, and experience all the consolations of, the Christian dispensation ! It is their peculiar privilege, not to confine their views of an eternal existence to the indistinct and fluctuating glimpses of philosophical vision ; but, with a hope full of immortality, to pierce directly to those blessed regions, where a gracious God and Saviour has prepared for them “ an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

“ Hence they

In spirit stand amidst the train of heaven,
And see God's face, whose full and constant smile
Doth so attend them thro' the wilds of life,
That natural dejection, flitting fears,
And all vicissitude, are swallow'd up
In one still dawn of that eternal day.”*

The rest, having expressed their assent to what Justin had said, added, “ Dispatch quickly your purpose : we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols !”

The prefect then pronounced upon them the following sentence :—“ Let these men, who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, be first scourged, and afterwards beheaded, according to the laws !”

The holy martyrs were then led back to prison, rejoicing and blessing God ; and shortly

* Gambold's Tragedy of Ignatius.

afterwards were severely scourged, and then beheaded.

Thus we see that Rusticus, a man so celebrated for his integrity and humanity, manifested, in his condemnation of Justin, the bigotry, intolerance, and injustice, of a Domitian. The badge of infamy was attached to the character of a Christian ; and Rusticus, with all his philosophy, had not “ learned to distinguish between a man who is under reproach, and a man who *deserves* it. He listened, where he ought to have suspected ; and he suspected, where he ought to have examined.”*

Justin Martyr suffered about the year of our Lord 167. He does not appear to have assumed the ecclesiastical character ; notwithstanding, he was always actively engaged in the cause of Christ. We may charitably surmise, that he retained his profession of philosophy, not merely to gratify his own taste, but also from a hope of gaining wise and learned men over to Christianity. If so, whilst we cannot but applaud the motives by which he was actuated, we may learn, from his want of success, not to attempt to make converts, by accommodating our religious tenets to the speculations of unenlightened reason. “ He found it easier,” remarks Mr. Milner, “ to provoke opposition, and to throw away his own life, than to persuade a single philosopher to become a Christian.”

Well had it been for the Church, if Christian

* Cecil's *Life of Cadogan*.

teachers had invariably confined themselves to a simple statement of Divine truth. An attempt to be wise above what is written, and to reconcile to human capacities things in their nature incomprehensible, was first made by Justin, was carried to a dreadful height under Origen, and at length produced a prolific tribe of flatterers of human ability, and detractors from the Divinity and atonement of "God our Saviour."

But whilst impartial justice obliges us to glance at this defect in our martyr, let us not be willing to cast a shade over his numerous excellencies. We behold in Justin an illustrious monument of Divine grace, and a bright ornament of our religion. The love of truth was the predominant passion of his soul: for this he was content to sacrifice every worldly consideration, and to meet death in all the horrors of martyrdom. From the period of his conversion to the termination of his life, he declined no dangers to promote the best interests of his fellow-creatures; and steadily consecrated his time, his talents, and his learning, to the suppression of sin and infidelity, and the promotion of piety and benevolence. We behold in Justin the gentleman, the scholar, and the Christian;—a rare example of that excellence in which the brilliant endowments of nature are happily blended with the supernatural gifts of grace.

IRENÆUS.

CHAPTER I.

Irenæus a disciple of Papias and Polycarp.—An account of Papias.—Irenæus is ordained presbyter of the Church of Lyons.—The dreadful persecution of the Church.—The martyrdoms of Pothinus, Sanctus, Ponticus, and Blandina.

IRENÆUS, the celebrated bishop of Lyons, was a Greek by birth, and probably a native of Smyrna. Nothing is now known with certainty respecting his family, or the time of his birth:* it is probable that his parents were in easy circumstances, as he received a liberal education, whereby he was qualified to write an important work against heretics, which has rendered him deservedly illustrious amongst the primitive fathers. It was the privilege of Irenæus, in early life, to be instructed in the essential doctrines of Christianity by two vene-

* Tillemont places his birth about the year 120; and Dupin, a little before the year 140.

rable saints, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna; both of whom had been disciples of the apostle John. Of the latter, an account has been already given: of the former, Eusebius remarks, that "he was an eloquent man, and skilful in the Scriptures;" though he elsewhere represents him as "a person of no great capacity," and observes, that he understood literally what the apostles spoke in a mystical sense respecting the Millennium. He afterwards states, that Irenæus, and several other primitive teachers, from deference to the authority of Papias, maintained the same opinion. May it not, however, be reasonably questioned whether Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, and other celebrated fathers, were likely to be led astray by a weak contemporary? Or, rather, may it not be asserted, that the very circumstance of their receiving this doctrine from his testimony, affords not only no inconsiderable proof of the soundness of Papias's judgment, but also an indirect evidence that the earlier Christians were right in their opinion respecting the Millennium, and that Origen, Dionysius, and Eusebius, were mistaken? The principal observations of Eusebius on this subject are inserted in the annexed note.*

* Eusebius having remarked, that Irenæus speaks of Papias as a hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp, and the author of five books, shortly afterwards cites the following quotation from Papias: "I do not consider it a burdensome employment to insert with my own interpretations what I have

It is highly probable that Irenæus continued but a short time with Papias, and that he chiefly resided with Polycarp at his native city. Kindnesses

learned from the elders, and do well remember, confirming the truth by them. For I take no pleasure, as many do, in those who talk a great deal, but in such as teach the truth ; nor in such as repeat strange precepts, but in such as relate the things delivered by the Lord for the instruction of our faith, and which proceed from the truth itself. If at any time I met with one who had conversed with the elders, I immediately enquired respecting their sayings : What Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, or Matthew, had said ? What Aristion, John the presbyter, or any other of the disciples of our Lord, had said ? For I was of opinion, that I should not derive so much profit from written documents as from the oral traditions of those who were still alive."

" This Papias," Eusebius shortly afterwards adds, " often mentions Aristion and John the presbyter by name, and inserts in his writings the traditions he had received from them. It is worth while to add, that Papias records some miracles, and other singular circumstances, which he had learnt by tradition. He mentions a wonderful relation, which he had received from the daughters of Philip the apostle, who resided with their father at Hierapolis ; namely, that a dead man was raised to life in his time ; and that Justus, surnamed Barsabas, through the mercy of God, received no injury from some deadly poison, which he had drank. Amongst other things, which the same writer has related on tradition, he mentions some strange parables of our Saviour, mixed with fabulous doctrine. He also asserts, that the kingdom of Christ shall actually subsist upon this earth for a thousand years after the resurrection. I suppose," continues Eusebius, " that he fell into this error by misunderstanding the meaning of the apostles, and not perceiving that they spoke in a mystical and figurative manner ; for he was a person of no great capacity, as may be conjectured from

received in youth, especially if they be of a religious nature, make an indelible impression on a well-disposed mind. Irenæus always retained a grateful recollection of this venerable instructor; and treasured in his memory, even to his dying day, the most minute circumstances of his conversation with him.

In his epistle to Florinus he remarks, “ The instructions of our childhood grow with our growth, and adhere to us most closely. I can describe the very spot in which the blessed Polycarp sat and discoursed;—his coming in and going out;—the manner of his life, and the figure of his body;—his discourses to the people;—the accounts he gave us of his conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord; and how he rehearsed their sayings, and what things he had heard from them respecting our Lord, his miracles, and doctrines. These things, through the mercy of God bestowed upon me, I heard with attention, and copied them out, not on paper but on my heart; and ever since, through the grace of God, I have retained a distinct recollection of them.”

It is not improbable that Irenæus attended his venerable preceptor, upon his journey to Rome, about the year 158, where he travelled, as was mentioned in a former narrative, to consult with

his writings. Several ecclesiastical writers, however, were led into the same error from the respect they bore to the antiquity of Papias; as Irenæus and the rest, who maintained that opinion.”—*Eccles. Hist.* l. 3. c. 39.

Anicetus respecting the Paschal controversy. From hence he is reported, at Polycarp's desire, to have sailed to France, then called Gaul, to officiate as presbyter under Pothinus, the laborious and successful bishop of the Church at Lyons.

The Gospel is supposed to have been first introduced into this city by some Christian merchants from Asia, who traded thither; and afterwards on their requesting Polycarp to recommend to them a suitable pastor, Pothinus was appointed to occupy that important station. When will moderns, with all their enlightened views and improvements, learn to make navigation and commerce subservient to the propagation of Christianity? Thrice blessed, indeed, is that merchant, who, in his intercourse with Heathen nations, forgets not, amidst the various articles he offers to their notice, to recommend the pearl of great price, **THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD!**

For several years Irenæus laboured in this populous city under the direction of Pothinus; and no where did the power of genuine piety more evidently appear than among their people. Great numbers of persons were, through their means, converted to the Christian religion, whose holy and consistent lives, and the patience with which they afterwards endured the most severe afflictions for Christ's sake, rather than renounce their religion, demonstrated the reality and depth of their piety.

At length, in the year 177, this Church, which

had hitherto experienced a freedom from outward trials, was harassed with the united fury of an enraged people, a Pagan priesthood, and a cold blooded philosophical emperor. The persecution appears to have originated in a popular tumult between the Christian and Heathen worshippers, during the continuance of which numbers of the former were cast into prison, and their slaves, by threats, promises, and torture, were prevailed on to accuse them of crimes which had no existence, and of opinions which they never held. Amongst the various enormities, which were laid to their charge, they were especially accused of eating human flesh, and committing the grossest incest and impurity. By these means the populace were for a time incensed to madness against them. Even those who had formerly been attached to them by kindred, affinity, or friendship, were transported beyond all bounds with indignation. In the mean time, the magistrates gave credit, or rather pretended to give credit, to the testimony of servants against their masters; and, in defiance of the dictates of common justice, put the Christians to the rack; endeavouring, by torments of various kinds, to extort from them a confession of the crimes they were charged with. In vain was it that these unfortunate people persisted, with the utmost constancy, to the last, to assert their innocence. Their punishment had been pre-determined; and they were pronounced guilty, and consigned over to various kinds of death.

At length the fury of the populace and magistrates was for a short time restrained by some of the confessors' pleading the privilege of Roman citizenship. The governor, in consequence, wrote to the emperor, and waited for his instructions. The interval which this circumstance occasioned, though of short continuance, was attended with the most important and spiritual advantage to the persecuted church. To adopt their own language ; " The unbounded compassion of Christ appeared in the patience of many. Dead* members were restored to life by means of the living ; the martyrs became singularly serviceable to the lapsed ; and thus the Church rejoiced to receive her sons returning to her bosom. By these means most of those who had denied Christ were recovered, dared to profess their Saviour, and again experienced the Divine life in their souls. They approached the tribunal ; and (their God, who willeth not the death of a sinner, being again precious to their souls,) desired a fresh opportunity of being interrogated by the governor."

The anxiously expected answer from the emperor at length arrived ; and the fury of their enemies was again freed from restraint. Aurelius gave command that " the confessors of Christ should be put to death ; and that the apostates from their Divine Master should be liberated." It was, during the general assembly, held annually at

* Dead in their spiritual affections.

Lyons, and frequented from all parts, that the Christian prisoners were again exposed to the populace. Having been once more examined by the governor, those who were Roman citizens were beheaded, and the rest were exposed to wild beasts. Now also it was that our Redeemer was magnified in those who had apostatized. "Being questioned separately from the rest, as persons soon to be set at liberty, they made a confession, to the surprise of the Heathens, and were added to the list of martyrs. A small number, indeed, remained in apostasy; but they were persons who possessed not the least spark of Divine faith, had no acquaintance with the riches of Christ in their souls, nor any fear of God before their eyes. By their life they had brought a reproach on Christianity, and had evidenced themselves to be the children of perdition; but all the rest were added to the Church."*

"The difference," remarks Mr. Milner, "between true and merely professing Christians is well stated, and deserves to be noticed. A season of persecution separates real believers, and real experienced Christians, from others, much more visibly than ministers can now do by the most judicious distinctions."

And now the fires of the adversaries broke out, and raged with inconceivable fury, whilst a noble army of martyrs, of both sexes, and all ages and

* Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons.

ranks in life, bore a glorious testimony to the grace of God, who enabled them to triumph over all the cruel and malicious purposes of their persecutors. Amongst the various martyrs, who suffered at Lyons during this persecution, were Pothinus, the bishop; Sanctus, a deacon; Maturus, a late convert; Ponticus, a youth of fifteen; and Blandina, a female slave. A short account of each of their sufferings may here be properly introduced. It will serve to display the malignity of their persecutors, and the support which God can afford His people amidst the greatest trials.

The venerable bishop Pothinus, although upwards of ninety years of age, and very infirm and asthmatic, after having suffered a variety of ill treatment, was spurned, kicked, and pelted, by the people; each thinking himself deficient in zeal, until he had personally insulted this aged saint. He was then thrown into prison, almost breathless; and, after two days, expired.

Sanctus, the deacon, after having patiently sustained the most barbarous indignities, was scorched with hot plates of brass, applied to the most tender parts of his body. Still, however, he remained firm in his confession; "being no doubt," to use the forcible expression of those who witnessed his sufferings, "bedewed and refreshed by the heavenly fountain of the water of life, which flows from Christ." In the mean time his body was a sufficient witness of the torments he sustained, being so contracted, wounded, and scorched, as no

longer to retain the human form. His patience shewed to the surrounding multitude that nothing need to be feared where the love of the Father is experienced; and that nothing is grievous where the glory of Christ is exhibited. Some days after, in company with Maturus, he underwent fresh tortures; and at length, after their bodies had been broiled alive on an iron chair, they expired, "A SPECTACLE UNTO THE WORLD, AND TO ANGELS, AND TO MEN!"

During this tremendous season the poor female slave, Blandina, was not deserted by her heavenly Father. Though of a delicate habit of body, she was endued with so much fortitude, that whilst those, who successively tortured her from morning to night, were exhausted with fatigue, and expressed their astonishment to find her still alive, she evidently seemed to recover strength, whilst she repeatedly exclaimed, "I am a Christian, and no evil is committed amongst us." For several days after these acute sufferings, she was brought, with Ponticus, to witness the tortures inflicted on the other martyrs. At length the concluding scene of their own trials arrived: and now their tortures were aggravated by all sorts of methods; no pity being shewn to the sex of the one, or the tender age of the other. The lad, encouraged by his female partner in sufferings, bore with astonishing fortitude his accumulated tortures, and then gave up the ghost. And Blandina, having again endured stripes, the tearing of wild beasts, the iron chair,

and the tossing of a wild bull, yielded up her spirit into the hands of her beloved Lord.

In the mean time the savage persecutors, as if anxious, even after death, to vent their fury on the martyrs, appointed guards, for six days, to watch their lacerated remains, lest any of their friends should bury them. They then burnt them to ashes, and cast them into the river, that there might appear no remnant of them on the earth.

One more circumstance is well worthy of notice. Some who, to avoid persecution, denied their Saviour, were, nevertheless, imprisoned, and afterwards punished as severely as their faithful brethren, though with this remarkable difference:—The latter proceeded to martyrdom with cheerful steps, their very countenances being irradiated with grace and glory; whereas the former went on dejected and spiritless, and were insulted even by the Heathens, for their infidelity and cowardice.*

* See the Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons.

CHAPTER II.

Irenæus appointed bishop of Lyons.—The emperor Commodus protects the Christians.—An account of the Valentinians.—Irenæus writes his work against heresies.

AT the commencement of the persecution, some of the martyrs, who were then in prison, more anxious to maintain the purity of the Christian faith than to provide for their own safety, wrote an epistle to Eleutherus, bishop of Rome, warning him of some of the popular errors of the day, and bearing the most honourable testimony to Irenæus, who was deputed to carry their epistle, as a presbyter of eminent zeal and piety. Immediately on his return to Lyons, Irenæus was unanimously appointed bishop of the place, in the room of his venerable friend Pothinus, who had already been crowned with martyrdom.

Never, perhaps, did a minister enter on a charge under more distressing circumstances. Dreadful persecutions assailed the Church without, and subtle heresies soon after began to harass it within; whilst his office eminently exposed him to the attacks of every enemy. Paul's emphatical language will accurately describe the labours and

sufferings which a bishop in that day must necessarily expect;—"in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." Surely, under such circumstances, no one would enter upon the sacred office, unless it were his "earnest expectation and hope, that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or death."

How long the torrent of persecution raged through the streets of Lyons, is uncertain. Let us hope that it was but of short continuance: probably it spent itself by its own violence. In the mean time a protector of the oppressed Christians was growing up in the very family of the persecutor. Commodus, the son and successor of Aurelius, though a most worthless and profane prince, was, in one respect, more just and equitable than his father. During the whole of his reign he granted peace to the Church of Christ throughout the world. He is said to have been influenced in this matter by a favourite concubine, a woman of low rank, whose name was Marcia, who, either from pity or esteem, espoused the cause of the oppressed Christians. "There is something," it has been justly observed, "in real Christian virtue venerable in the eyes of a profligate, though abhorred by the proud philosopher or Pharisee; and God can make the basest of persons subservient to the purposes of His own glory, and the good of His Church. The wretch, Henry the Eighth, no more

meant the Reformation, than Commodus the protection of Christianity. Eventually their lawless passions produced these blessed effects.”*

If Commodus at all exerted himself in favour of the Christians during the latter years of Aurelius, his influence may justly be supposed not to have been without effect on the subsequent conduct of his stoical parent, who, we may conjecture, would rather restrain the effects of his hatred to the Christians, than allow the boasted calmness of his mind to be discomposed by an incessant controversy with his son.—Commodus succeeded to the throne in the year 180.

Irenæus appears to have been admirably calculated for the important situation in which he was placed. The diligence wherewith he applied himself to the duties of his ministry was not more exemplary than the assiduity with which he employed his pen in defending the religion of Christ. He ably refuted the various heresies of the day; the number and malignity of which afford a lamentable proof of the corruption which was already creeping into the Church. In this kind of writing, indeed, he appears particularly to have excelled. He traced the different heresies through their endless ramifications, † pointed out their evil tendency,

* Hæweis's Church History.

† The advocates of the different systems of Menander, Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, and other teachers, who slightly differed from each other, were all comprehended under the term

and then contrasted them with the sacred religion of inspiration.

Of the various works which Irenæus composed, his Treatise against Heresies, in five books, is almost the only one of which any traces remain. This work was written in Greek ; but the original has long since been lost ; and it now exists only in an ancient and barbarous Latin translation, with the exception of several fragments preserved by Epiphanius, Eusebius, and other ecclesiastical writers. Notwithstanding, however, all its present disadvantages, it still displays in many parts much perspicuity of thought, and brilliancy of expression ; and it was, doubtless, at the time of its publication, highly beneficial to the cause of Christianity.

Few readers would be interested in the refutation of antiquated heresies, which, though supported by some learned and philosophical individuals, exceeded, in absurdity, all the modern reveries of a Swedenburgh, or a Southcott. They originated in general from a heterogeneous mixture of the Platonic notion of ideas, the Pythagorean mysteries of numbers, the theogony of the heathen poets, and the Gospel of St. John.* A brief analysis, however, of the principal one, which he exposes in his first book, may here be not improperly inserted.

Gnostics, an appellation expressive of superior knowledge ; which was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically applied to them by their adversaries.

* Collinson's Bampton Lectures.

The Valentinians, the principal heretics opposed by Irenæus, had invented a monstrous system of divinity by the propagation of Æons or ages, whom they divided into male and female. Their principal Æon, whom they personified under the names of Proärchë and Bythos, [before the Beginning, and Abyss,] lived for a considerable time in silence and repose with Ennoia [Thought]. At length they produced two other Æons, Noûs, [Understanding] and Aletheia [Truth]. These two produced Logos, [The Word] and Zoë [Life]; and they in their turn produced Anthrōpos [Man], and Ecclesia [the Church]. These constituted the Ogdoad, or first eight Æons, who were the root and substance of all the rest; for Logos and Zoë produced ten other Æons; and Anthrōpos and Ecclesia twelve more. All these together formed the Plerōma, or the invisible fulness, in which God especially dwells, and makes the fullest discoveries of Himself. It was on this account they said that the Saviour, whom they did not like to call the Lord, performed nothing publicly, during the first thirty years of His life, wherein he pointed out the mystery of these Æons. They also pretended that the apostle Paul referred to the same mystery, when he said, that it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness [all the Plerōma] dwell; * as also when he remarked that the Church was His body, the fulness [the Plerōma] of Him that filleth all in all.†

* Col. i. 19.

† Eph. i.

At length the last of the Æons, whose name was Sophia [Wisdom], wished to go out of the Plerōma; but was prevented by Horos [the Boundary]. From her mental defection, however, proceeded a shapeless being called Achamoth, from which substance the world was afterwards formed; the tears it shed, in consequence of its being out of the Plerōma, producing the water; its fears the elements; and its laughter the light. As a counterbalance to this evil, there were two new emanations, Christ and the Holy Ghost, who delivered it from its passions; and after some time the Saviour, who descended on Jesus at His baptism, but left Him before His crucifixion.

Such is the sum of this extravagant heresy, which, amidst its profane absurdities, bears no indistinct testimony to the all-important doctrines of original sin, and the fall and redemption of man. It shews us to what lengths of sublime nonsense the human imagination may arrive, when freed from the wholesome restraints of Scripture. The opinions of these heretics are in their nature so preposterous, as at first to induce us to suppose that they were not worthy of a serious refutation. To form, however, a proper opinion on this subject, we must transport ourselves to the time in which they were first disseminated; and we shall then find, upon the concurring testimony of ecclesiastical writers, that they were received by great numbers of professing Christians; that they were productive of great immoralities; and that hence it

was highly important, for the credit of Christianity, as well as for the recovery of the deluded heretics, that real Christians should publicly oppose and refute these absurd and blasphemous notions.

Irenæus having, in his first book, exposed the ridiculous visions of the Valentinians, proceeds in the following one to refute them. To adopt his own metaphor, he removed the covert and bushes from the wild beast, that it might appear in its own shape, and be more easily destroyed. He then takes occasion to shew that the power of working genuine miracles was still retained in the Church. His sentiments, however, are not so explicitly stated as to exclude all difference of opinion respecting his meaning. Some have conceived that he intimates that miracles of every description were still wrought in the Church ; and others again, that all Christians could perform them. The learned Dr. Jortin considers that he merely states, that none but true Christians possessed the power of working miracles, and thus expounds the sentiments of Irenæus. " Heretics never had any miraculous powers, much less the power of raising the dead : yet this our Lord and His apostles have done ; this the brethren have often, by their united prayers, obtained from God : the dead have been raised, and have continued with us for some years. The true disciples of Christ receive various gifts, and daily impart them as freely as they have received them ; some foretell future events, others heal the sick, others expel evil spirits."

In his third book Irenæus speaks at large re-

specting the writers of the four Gospels, and their ability and fitness for their important work. Two quotations from him on this subject will not prove uninteresting. "We have not received," he observes, "the knowledge of the way of our salvation from any others than those by whom the Gospel was brought to us. These persons having first preached the Gospel, afterwards by the will of God committed it to writing, that it might be, for the time to come, the foundation and pillar of our faith. For after that our Lord rose from the dead, and the apostles were endued from above, with the power of the Holy Ghost descending upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to the boundaries of the earth, declaring the blessing of heavenly peace, being all of them equally instructed in the Gospel of God. Then Matthew, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and founding a Church there, wrote his Gospel among the Jews in their own language. And after their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter; and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel which that apostle had preached. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus, in Asia. All these have declared to us, that there is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, mentioned in the law and the prophets; and one Christ,

the Son of God. He, therefore, who does not assent to them, despiseth not merely those who knew the mind of the Lord; but also Christ, who is the Lord Himself, and the Father. Such an one is self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as all heretics do."

Irenæus afterwards refers to the different periods from which the evangelists commence their Gospel histories, and bears the following decided testimony to the proper Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ: "The Word, the Framer of all things, who sits upon the cherubim, and upholds all things, having appeared to men, has given unto us a Gospel of a fourfold character, but joined in one Spirit. John's Gospel declares His primary and glorious generation from the Father;—*In the beginning was the Word*. Luke's Gospel being of a priestly character, commences with Zacharias, the priest, offering incense to God. Matthew relates His generation according to man;—*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*. Mark begins from the prophetic Spirit, which came down from above to men, saying,—*The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Esaias the prophet*."

In another part of the same book he thus refers to the Divinity and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, those grand doctrines of our holy religion: "Out of His transcendant love to His creatures, He endured to be born of a virgin, Himself united manhood to Godhead, suffered under Pontius

Pilate, rose again, and ascended into heavenly brightness. He shall come again in glory, the Saviour of all those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, banishing into eternal fire those who transgress His laws, and despise the Father, and His coming. He redeemed us from apostasy by His blood, that we might be a holy people. The same Person, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, is Lord of all, and also King, and God, and Judge."

In another part of his refutation, having remarked, that the truly spiritual man shall judge the Gentiles, the Jews, and the Valentinians; he adds, "He shall also judge the Ebionites [or Unitarians]: for how can they be saved unless He were God, who accomplished their salvation upon earth? Or how shall man pass to God, if God have not passed to man? How could He be greater than Solomon, the Lord of David, the conqueror of death, if He were the same substance with man?"

"With such passages," observes Mr. Collinson, "as these before him, Dr. Priestley asserts, that the primitive fathers, and Irenæus in particular, did not reckon Unitarianism among the heresies of their time. Probably this was not a very prevalent heresy; and, therefore, their censures are not so immediately directed against it. But with equal cogency of logic might it be contended, that because the controversy between the Church of England and the Church of Rome turns not

on the Divine atonement, therefore these two societies were indifferent on that point of doctrine.”*

Besides the passage from Irenæus referred to above, we find a similar testimony to the Divinity of Christ in the fifth book, where, having mentioned the incarnation of Christ, he continues ;—“ He also remitted the sins of men, and thus clearly shewed Himself who He was : for none can remit sins but God alone. As man he suffered for us ; as God He pities and forgives the trespasses that we have committed against our Creator.”

The necessity of the influence of the Spirit is thus stated by him in the following passage : “ Our Lord promised to send the Paraclete, who should prepare us for God. For as wheat is a dry mass, and cannot be made bread without water ; so neither can we be made one in Christ Jesus without the water that proceedeth from heaven.”

In his fourth book, having referred to the importance of a believer’s seeking after growth in grace, Irenæus observes, “ It is a good thing to obey God, and to believe in Him, and to keep His commandments ; and this is the life of man : whereas not to obey God is evil, and is his death. Man, by a greatness of mind bestowed on him by God, has knowledge of the good of obedience, and of the evil of disobedience ; so that, making experience of each by his mind’s eye, he may choose with judgment the better part.” He shortly after-

* Bampton Lectures.

wards adds, " To make is the property of the loving kindness of God : to be made is the property of human nature. If, therefore, you offer to God what is your part, that is, faith in Him, and subjection, you will experience the operation of His art, and will be the perfect work of God. Whereas, if you will not trust in Him, but will avoid His hands, the cause of imperfection will be in you for disobedience, and not in God, who hath called you. He has sent messengers to invite to the wedding ; and those who have not obeyed Him, have deprived themselves of the King's supper.

" They who have gone astray from the Light of the Father, and have transgressed the law of liberty, have strayed through their own fault, being made free of choice, and masters of themselves. But God, who foreknows all things, has prepared fit habitations for each : to those who seek and run after the light of incorruption, He mercifully gives the light which they long for ; but for those who despise it, who avert themselves from it, avoid it, and, as it were, blind themselves, He has prepared darkness congenial to such haters of the Light : for those also who fly from His service is appointed suitable punishment."

The writer of these narratives has neither inclination, nor ability, to enter into the discussion of those mysterious subjects, which have for many years unhappily distracted the Church of Christ. In a work, however, professing to develope the religious sentiments of the primitive fathers, and

with such a quotation as the preceding before him, he considers himself obliged explicitly to state, that as far as his acquaintance with their writings extends, it appears evident to him that the controversy which has been so warmly agitated since the days of Augustine was unknown in their time, and that they in general expressed their sentiments respecting the freedom of the human will in language incompatible with that of the school of Calvin.

An author, who has paid considerable attention to the religious opinions of the early Christians, has made the following remarks on this interesting subject: "The fathers of the three first centuries appear to me to be unanimous in stating that all goodness is from God, and that without Divine grace no man can have faith, hope, or charity, or obtain eternal salvation: they also appear to me to be unanimous in stating, that every man possesses a freedom of action, that he is not a slave to uncontrollable destiny, but is master of himself to choose good or evil, life or death. If there be a seeming or a real inconsistency between these two statements, it must be attributed to the nature of the subject itself; 'in which there is,' to use the words of Hooker, 'a gulf, which, while we live, we shall never fathom.' I have no doubt that the fathers thought that 'God our Saviour would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'"

The same writer shortly afterwards adds, "The

whole Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians is an exhortation to Christians, that being justified by faith they should, by obedience to the motions of the Holy Ghost, attain salvation. Justin Martyr makes frequent use of the term *αυτεξουσια*, as applied to man's choice of good and evil; and all succeeding fathers use phrases of the same import.'*'

* Collinson's Bampton Lectures.

The reader, who wishes for further information on this subject, may satisfactorily refer to the work of a living prelate, the Bishop of Lincoln's Refutation of Calvinism. Whatever be the merit of this publication, in other respects, it has irrefragably demonstrated, by its numerous and appropriate quotations from the fathers, the Anti-Calvinism, if we may be allowed the expression, of the Christians of the four first centuries:

CHAPTER III.

The revival of the controversy respecting Easter.—Irenæus's pacific conduct on the occasion.—Severus persecutes the Christians.—The martyrdom of Irenæus.—His character.

A PERSON of the name of Victor was at this time* bishop of Rome; “a man,” remarks Dr. Cave, “furious and intemperate, impatient of contradiction, and who let loose the reins of an impotent and ungovernable passion.”† Alas! how lamentable to read that, at so early a stage of the Church, a person of such a character should be found occupying so important and responsible a situation!

“Nothing,” observes Jerome, “is more unseemly than a passionate instructor, who, when he ought to be an example of gentleness and humility to all, is distinguished on the contrary by fierce looks, trembling lips, intemperate noise, and unbridled revilings. Such a man, instead of, by persuasion, recalling to righteousness those who wander, by harshness precipitates them into greater evil.”

Victor, perceiving that the Asiatic Churches were

* A. D. 196.

† Cave's Life of Irenæus.

unwilling to attend to his injunctions respecting the festival of Easter, inveighed against them in vehement terms; and finding that, notwithstanding his fulminations, they continued contumacious, as if he felt the spirit of the future papacy residing in him, he proceeded, without farther ceremony, to excommunicate them.

The Eastern Churches, in the mean time, little intimidated by the threatenings of Victor, firmly, but temperately, justified their conduct, alleging that they ought to obey God rather than man. Even those of the bishops, who agreed with Victor on the point at issue, disapproved of his spirit, and strongly urged him to pursue a more temperate course. The progress of this unhappy dissension was at length stopped by the wise and moderate remonstrances of Irenæus, who wrote several pacific letters on the occasion. At last he expostulated with the proud prelate himself, and referred him to the conduct of Polycarp, and Anicetus, his predecessor, on that very controversy. "The presbyters, who preceded you," he remarks, "communicated with those of their brethren, who differed from them in opinion on this subject: neither did it occasion a disagreement between the blessed Polycarp, and Anicetus, bishop of Rome, who retained each his own sentiments without contention; and Anicetus, as a mark of respect, permitted Polycarp to administer the Eucharist in his own church."

In consequence of the exertions of Irenæus, a

cessation of strife took place, and each party agreed amicably to retain their own customs, without censuring those who differed from them. The name, indeed, of our pious prelate seems well to have corresponded with his general character. He was a *lover of peace*, and a *peace-maker*. At the same time his candour never degenerated into indifference. Few men appear more happily to have blended genuine candour with holy zeal; faithfulness in bearing testimony against evil with the tenderest compassion for the offending person; a constant aim to promote the highest degree of piety in himself and others with a readiness to make every charitable allowance for the failings of good men.

“ If we have not,” remarks a popular writer, “ knowledge enough to coincide in speculation, we may at least have charity enough to agree in practice, by treating each other’s opinions with tenderness; and in all our differences and discussions keeping in view that beautiful maxim inculcated by a very learned, a very zealous, and a very benevolent father, *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*.”*

The outward peace, which the Church had now enjoyed for several years, was at length, in the year 202, succeeded by a bitter storm of persecution. Although, in his younger days, the emperor Severus had been a cruel opposer of the Christians,

* Eustace’s Preliminary Discourse, p. xxxiv.

yet, during the ten first years of his reign, he manifested little enmity against them. Tertullian, indeed, informs us, that, in consequence of his having been miraculously cured of a disorder by a Christian, whose name was Proculus, he retained him as long as he lived in his palace; and, indeed, during that period he appears to have discovered no small predilection in favour of the Christians. The benefit, however, which he had received, though for a time it thus seemed to influence him, by no means changed his heart, or produced any radical alteration in his feelings respecting them.

Real gratitude is as a stream supplied by a perennial fountain; but that which springs up on some extraordinary occasion in an unfeeling breast, is like a summer's flood, powerful in its first effects, but of short duration. A man of this character is not unfrequently glad to free himself from the burden of obligation; and on some affront, real or supposed, will rejoice to return an injury for a received kindness. Such was the conduct of this savage tyrant. *Cruel and unrelenting*,* as his name implied, finding that the Christians would not cease, at his command, to propagate their doctrines,† he forgot all his former obligations and promises, and sacrificed their lives at the shrine of his cruelty and offended pride.

* “Verè Pertinax, verè Severus,” was a common proverb in his day.

† “Judæos fieri sub gravi poenâ retuit: idem etiam de Christianis sanxit.”—Spartian.

The storm of persecution fell, on the present occasion, with the greatest weight at Alexandria; but it was also felt in other parts of the empire, and particularly, if we may credit Gregory of Tours, at Lyons; to which place the attention of the emperor was the more likely to be directed, as he had probably been governor of that province during the persecution, which raged in the time of Aurelius. Thus was Lyons once more dyed with the blood of the martyrs!

The only account we have of the transactions which took place in this city during the present tremendous season, is given by the above-mentioned author; and, as it is not contradicted by more ancient writers, it may be considered as in the main authentic. He informs us, that after Irenæus had undergone much preparatory torture, he was put to death, and with him almost all the Christians of that populous city. The emperor is supposed to have been an eye-witness of this persecution; and, indeed, the great numbers that are said to have suffered agree but too well with the temper of this cruel prince, who had previously conceived a particular displeasure against the citizens of Lyons, and more especially against its Christian inhabitants.

Thus lived and died Irenæus, bishop of Lyons; a man eminently distinguished for his love to God, and his solicitude for the salvation of his fellow-creatures. In zeal, in disinterestedness, and self-denial, it would be difficult to find his superior. In order that he might promote the best interests of

his fellow-men, he deemed no dangers or difficulties too great to encounter. To accomplish this glorious design he submitted to learn the barbarous language of the country, and scrupled not to exchange the comforts and refinements of his native land for the rude manners of an illiterate and uncultivated people. Every Christian reader will admire this example of pious zeal and benevolence. And contemplating the yet deplorable state of many nations with respect to Christian light, such an instance, it may be hoped, will stimulate those who have ability, to promote the progress of the Gospel amongst the Heathen ; and some even to join the few who have hitherto offered themselves as missionaries in so great a service.

A short character of the writings and life of this eminent father, drawn by a celebrated French ecclesiastical historian, shall close this account of him :

“ The style of St. Irenæus (as far as we can judge by that part of his works which yet remains) is succinct, clear, and strong, but not very sublime. He declares himself, in his preface to the first book, that the elegance of a polite dissertation ought not to be sought for in his works ; because, residing among the Celtæ, it is impossible but that he should utter many barbarous words ; that he did not affect to discourse with eloquence or ornament, and that he knew not how to persuade by the force of his expressions, but that he wrote with a vulgar simplicity. He takes more pains to instruct his reader than to divert him ; and he endea-

vours more to convince him by the matter which he propounded, than by the manner of expressing them. It cannot be doubted, that he was a very profound scholar in all sorts of knowledge, as well profane as sacred. He perfectly understood the poets and philosophers. There was no heretic of whose doctrine and arguments he was ignorant. He had an exquisite knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; he retained an infinite number of things which the disciples of the apostles had taught by word of mouth; and, lastly, he was exceeding well versed in the history and discipline of the Church, so that nothing can be more literally true than what is attested of him by Tertullian, *Irenæus omnium Doctrinarum Curiosissimus explorator*. Moreover, his learning was accompanied with a great deal of prudence, humility, efficacy, and charity; and it may be justly affirmed, that he wanted nothing that was necessary for the qualification of a good Christian, an accomplished bishop, and an able ecclesiastical writer.”*

* Du Pin's History of Ecclesiastical Writers, Vol. I. p. 75.
Edit. Dublin. 1722.

TERTULLIAN.

CHAPTER I.

Tertullian, a native of Carthage.—His conversion to Christianity.—He composes his Apology for the Christians.

QUINTUS Septimius Florens Tertullianus, or, as he is usually called, Tertullian, was born at Carthage, the capital city of Africa, about the year 160.* He is generally considered the most ancient Latin father, whose writings are come down to our times. The number and significance of his names intimate that he was descended from illustrious ancestors. The prænomen Quintus was probably given him on account of his being the fifth son of his parents. His second name, Septimius, seems to indicate that he was descended from the Gens Septimia, a celebrated tribe among the Romans, being first regal, afterwards plebeian, and, lastly, consular and patrician. He was probably called

* Tillemont.

Florens, from some particular family of that name ; and Tertullianus from his own father, whose name in that case was Tertullus.

His father, who was a Pagan, held a military office under the proconsul of Africa, and appears to have been very solicitous about his son's progress in literature. As soon as he had passed through the usual preparatory studies, which he accomplished with great rapidity and success, he was sent to the most eminent masters to complete his education ; and his attainments were such as might reasonably have been expected from a person of his superior abilities, and who possessed such early advantages.

It appears that Tertullian studied the law as a science, but was never called to the bar, or in any other way practised as a lawyer. He was deeply read in geometry and physics ; was acquainted with the best poets and philosophers ; and was well versed in history. Eusebius, after remarking that he was very conversant with the Roman laws, adds, that he was likewise " eminent in other respects, and especially renowned among the Latin writers." The learned Dr. Cave also, though he acknowledges with Lactantius, that his style is somewhat rugged and obscure, yet confesses that " it is lofty and masculine, and carries a kind of majestic eloquence along with it, that gives a pleasant relish to the judicious and inquisitive reader."

Tertullian possessed great brilliancy of wit, though unhappily united to an irritability of tem-

per, which he seriously laments in his book of Patience. The following words of the Psalmist have not inaptly been applied to him: "His teeth were spears and arrows, and his tongue a sharp sword." He himself acknowledges, that he had, in his unregenerate state, drawn his tongue as a sword against the true God, and shot his bitter words against the sacred religion of Christ. It appears also, that, previously to his conversion, he was an adulterer; that he delighted in the bloody diversions of the amphitheatre, and that he had attained to a dreadful pre-eminence in sin. No man, indeed, seems to have been more deeply implicated in the abominations of the age; or to have been better adapted, as an instrument of Satan, to uphold the tottering fabric of Pagan immorality and superstition, than Tertullian, in his Gentile state; so also was no one, after his conversion, more conspicuous for purity of heart and manners, or better qualified, by natural abilities and attainments, to attack the strong holds of Heathenism with the weapons of keen sarcasm and sound argument.

Tertullian appears to have embraced the Christian religion a little before the conclusion of the second century, and at the commencement of the reign of Severus. It is also highly probable, that he shortly after assumed the ecclesiastical character, though the exact time of his ordination cannot be ascertained. We have no distinct information respecting the circumstances which led to his con-

version ; but as we are all apt to urge upon others those considerations which have most deeply affected ourselves, we may reasonably suppose that he was brought to faith in Christ chiefly by those arguments which, in different parts of his writings he so powerfully states in defence of Christianity. We there find him insisting upon the antiquity of the Mosaic writings, and the mighty works and wisdom of that lawgiver ; upon the successive links of prophecy, which make up one chain of connected evidence, conducting the humble enquirer to Christ, with a direction as plain as that of the star, which led the wise men from the East to the place of our Lord's nativity. We find him also continually expatiating on the miracles of Christ and His apostles, together with the intrinsic excellence and moral efficacy of the Gospel, as furnishing indisputable proofs of the truth of our religion. These are some of the arguments he most frequently urges against his adversaries ; and such, therefore, as we may conclude, had the greatest effect in producing his own conversion.

Not long after he embraced Christianity, Tertullian composed his admirable Apology, in which his eloquence and argumentative powers appear most conspicuous. In many respects this work resembles that of Justin, on the same subject ; but the language is more bold, and the style more elevated, than that of his predecessor.

Tertullian does not hesitate to charge his persecutors with exercising an unjust tyranny ; and stig-

matizes, in the plainest terms, the inhuman malignity and cruelty of Nero and Domitian.

It is probable that this book was written about the close of the second century ; at which period Severus had not commenced his persecutions against the Christians, though at that time they were severely treated in Rome by Plautianus, the prefect of the city, and by Saturninus, the proconsul. Hence Tertullian remarks, " Of all your emperors, down to this present reign, who understood any thing of religion or humanity, name me one who persecuted the Christians."—He also denominates Severus, " The most constant prince ;" and in a treatise, which he afterwards addressed to Scapula, he remarks, that in the first part of his reign he was very indulgent to the Christians. Indeed this emperor had peculiar reason to be so ; for, besides a signal cure, which he had received through the instrumentality of one of them, he never found a single Christian engaged in the factions, either of Albinus or Niger ; a circumstance which Tertullian delights to record. A seditious Christian was an anomaly not to be met with, in the early ages of the Church. But though Severus issued no edicts against the Christians till the year 202, the people were too hostile to them to restrain their malevolence. They had also an old law on their side, which prohibited the introducing of a new god, without the approbation of the senate ; and any pretence, we know, will serve an enraged mob for reasons, as well as arms.

Tertullian having introduced his Apology, by observing, that the Christian cause was the only one which the guardians of the Roman empire were ashamed to recognize, requests that they will permit Truth to wait on them in private, and read that Apology he was not suffered to speak. “ We enter not upon our defence (he proceeds) by soliciting your favour and compassion, for we know the nature of our religion too well to be surprised at the unjust treatment it meets with. Christianity is a stranger upon earth, and expects not to experience kindness in a foreign land: her extraction is Divine; and her abode, her hopes, her friends, and her preferments, are all in heaven. The only boon she asks is, that she may not be condemned unknown. And what can the laws suffer by admitting her to a fair hearing? Will not their authority and justice, by such a measure, be rendered more conspicuous? Whereas, if you condemn her unheard, you will be chargeable with the most flagrant injustice, and be properly suspected of remaining in wilful ignorance of a religion which, if known, you could not condemn. We declare, then, that ignorance is the principal cause of your unjustifiable hatred of the Christian name; a circumstance which, whilst it may seem to excuse your conduct, does in reality bind upon you a greater weight of iniquity. What can be more unjust, than for men to hate that with which they are unacquainted, supposing even that the thing itself is deserving of their aversion! For then

only can any thing reasonably be hated, when we are acquainted with its demerits. When, therefore, men will be thus hating in ignorance, may we not reasonably suppose, that virtue, as well as vice, will frequently fall under their displeasure? Hence, we bring two charges against our opponents: the one for hating us *ignorantly*; and the other, which is connected with it, for hating us *unjustly*. Indeed it is no small testimony of the criminality of your ignorance, that numbers, who in former times hated us on the same ground, immediately dismissed their hatred, on becoming acquainted with our real character and sentiments. In consequence of their knowledge of us, they became Christians; and now deeply and publicly lament their former ignorance and guilt.

“ The common cry now is, ‘ The city is invested; the country, the camp, the provinces, are over-run with Christians;’—and, indeed, their numbers are not less than are generally reported. This universal revolt of all ages, qualities, and sexes, is lamented as a general evil, instead of leading you to suspect that there is some secret excellence in our religion, which can produce such wonderful effects. But nothing will induce some characters to entertain rational suspicions, or to cultivate an acquaintance with Christianity. It is here alone that human curiosity seems to stagnate. On this subject ignorance is as much approved of, as knowledge is in all others.

“ But it is objected, that the number of Christians

is no proof of the goodness of their cause: many change from better to worse: many desert to the wrong side. And who denies this? Yet are any of those men, who are hurried away to sin by the violence of their passions, hardy enough to appeal to public justice in defence of their crimes? Every evil is naturally accompanied with shame and fear. The guilty seek for refuge in darkness: when apprehended, they tremble; when accused, they deny the charge, and are hardly to be tormented into a confession. When condemned, they lament; and whilst they reflect on the number of their sins, they impute their guilt to their stars or destiny; so unwilling are they to acknowledge that as their own act, which they confess to be criminal.

“ But do you discover any thing like this among Christians? Not one of them is ashamed, or repents; except, indeed, for not having sooner been a Christian. If he is summoned to trial, he goes to it with an air of triumph; if indicted, he makes no defence; when interrogated, he frankly confesses; and when condemned, returns thanks to his judges. What a strange monster of wickedness is this, which has not one feature of criminality belonging to it! Nothing of fear, or shame, or artifice, or repentance, or sorrow, attending it! What a strange evil is this, that makes the guilty rejoice, be ambitious of accusation, and happy in punishment!”

How lively a demonstration have we here of the truth and the power of Christianity; and how diffi-

cult to suppose that such appeals could be made, even to the most insensible opponent, without subduing prejudice, and producing conviction.

Tertullian afterwards graphically describes the hatred of the Pagans to Christianity, notwithstanding they were obliged to acknowledge its moral tendency. "Some have imbibed such an aversion to Christianity, as to prefer acquiescing in the grossest injuries, rather than admit it within their family. The husband, heretofore regardless of his wife's levity, turns her out of doors, as soon as she is chaste on principle. The father, formerly so tolerant towards his undutiful son, disinherits him now that he is become obedient. The master, once so kind to his dishonest servant, discards him now that he is made faithful. Thus offensive is the mere name of that religion, which has produced so important a reformation."

In another part of his Apology, after having described, in nervous language, the infamous characters whom the Heathens adored as gods, Tertullian sarcastically adds, "Even if we were to allow that your gods were a good sort of beings, yet how much more celebrated characters have you left in hell! There you have retained the wise Socrates, the just Aristides, the brave Themistocles, the victorious Alexander, the fortunate Polycrates, the rich Cræsus, and the eloquent Demosthenes! Which of your gods possessed the gravity and wisdom of Cato, the justice and courage of Scipio, the magnanimity of Pompey, the success of Sylla,

the wealth of Crassus, or the eloquence of Tully? How much wiser a part would your god-maker have acted, if he had deferred his apotheosis till the times of these celebrated men, whom, doubtless, he foresaw; but, as he was in a hurry, I suppose, and having bolted the door of heaven, he is now ashamed to find more illustrious characters groaning in hell."

In the following quotation Tertullian appeals to the consciences of mankind, and to various popular expressions in proof of the real existence of a Supreme superintending Providence. "Do you wish that we should prove the existence of the One true God, from the variety of His wonderful works which surround, support, and alternately delight and terrify us? Do you wish that we should prove it from the testimony of the soul itself? Confined as the soul is in the prison of the body, fettered by evil examples, enervated by lustful passions, enslaved by false gods; yet no sooner does it arise, as from a surfeit, or sickness, and enjoy some measure of health, than it instantly appeals to the Deity, and addresses Him by the name of God! 'The great God—The good God—What God hath given—God sees it—I recommend to God—and God will restore to me.'—These are expressions in general use. O, natural testimony of the soul in favour of Christianity! He who pronounces these words, looks not to the capital, but to heaven. The soul acknowledges the residence of the living God; from whence it derived its own origin."

The passages, adduced from this excellent work of Tertullian, have already been numerous : but the reader will not be displeased with another extract, as it affords us a most beautiful description of the manners and spirit of the Christians at that time, and also shews the astonishing progress which the religion of Jesus Christ had made at the end of the second century. “ We pray,” says this animated writer, “ for the safety of the emperors to God, even to the true, the living God, whose favour the emperors themselves prefer to that of all others, who are called gods. We look up to heaven with out-stretched hands, because they are harmless—with naked heads, because we are not ashamed—without a prompter, because we pray from the heart. We earnestly request for all emperors a long life, a secure empire, a safe palace, strong armies, a faithful senate, a well moralized people, a quiet state of the world, and whatever else they would wish for, either in their public or private capacity. These blessings we cannot solicit from any other, than from Him from whom we know we shall obtain them ; because He alone can grant them ; and we are they who may expect them of Him, being His servants, who worship Him alone, and are ready to lose our life in His service. Whilst our hands are thus stretched out in prayer, let your tormenting irons harrow our flesh ; let crosses suspend us ; let fires consume us ; let swords pierce our breasts ;—A PRAYING CHRISTIAN IS IN A FRAME FOR ENDURING ANY THING.

“ How is this, ye generous rulers? Will ye kill the good subject who supplicates God for the emperor? Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that His people should vindicate themselves by human fire, or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Were we disposed to act the part, I will not say of secret assassins, but of open enemies, should we want forces, or numbers? Are we not dispersed throughout the world? It is true, we are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum. **WE LEAVE YOU ONLY YOUR TEMPLES!**

“ For what war should we not be well prepared, even though unequal in numbers, who die with so much pleasure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to suffer death than to inflict it. We might, indeed, without striking a single blow, dreadfully revenge ourselves upon you; for were we to make a general secession from your dominions, you would stand aghast at the silence and solitude that would surround you. But we are dead to all ideas of worldly honour and dignity. Nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns. The whole world is our republic. We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope. We meet in our assemblies, as those who are about to storm heaven with the fervour of their devotions; a violence acceptable to God.

We assemble also to have recourse to the Divine oracles for caution and recollection on all occasions. By the Word of God we nourish our faith, erect our hope, and confirm our confidence; and we strengthen our discipline by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections; and by excommunication, when it is needful. This last, as being in the sight of God, is of great weight, and a presumptive prelude of the future judgment, if any one behave in so scandalous a manner as to be debarred from attending our sacred assemblies.

“ Those who preside amongst us are elderly persons, not distinguished for opulence, but worth of character; for wealth has no influence with us. Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety; and are expended, not in feasts and merry meetings, but in relieving the needy, supporting orphans and decrepit persons, and those who have suffered shipwreck; or who, for the Word of God, are condemned to the mines, or imprisonment. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some; SEE, (say they,) HOW THESE CHRISTIANS LOVE ONE ANOTHER!”

He then proceeds to notice their noble charities for the benefits of friends and enemies; their strict justice in paying every tax, without fraud or collusion; their purity, integrity, heavenly mindedness,

and passive endurance of injuries. These were prominent features in the character of the primitive Christians, their enemies themselves being judges! These were features, too, which testified their resemblance to their heavenly Father, and evidenced them to be "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty!"

A brief account of the nature of the feasts of love, celebrated by the primitive Christians, shall, at the same time, close this chapter, and our numerous quotations from Tertullian's *Apology*. "The nature of our supper," he observes, "is indicated by its name: it is called *agapë*, a word which, in the Greek language, signifies love. We are not careful about the expense of this entertainment; for we consider that as gain, which is expended with a pious purpose in the refreshment of our indigent brethren. From the honourable occasion of this banquet, you may judge of the manner of its being conducted. It consists in the discharge of religious duties: it admits of nothing that is vile, nothing that is immodest. Before we sit down, prayer is offered up to God. Those that are hungry eat as much as they desire; and every one drinks as much as is useful for sober men. We so feast as those who bear in mind that they are about to spend the night in prayer to God; and we so converse as those who are conscious that the Lord hears them. After the lamps are brought, and water to wash our hands, each of us, either from some portion of the holy Scrip-

tures, or from the spontaneous feelings of his mind, endeavours to praise God in the midst of the assembly. Our banquet is then closed, as it commenced, with prayer. We still retain the same regard to decency and propriety, as those who have rather celebrated an ordinance than partaken of a supper."

CHAPTER II.

Tertullian a married man.—His tracts to his wife, to Scapula, a persecutor, and to the martyrs.—The peculiar situation of the primitive Christians.—Tertullian's works against heretics.—His tract against the public shows of the Pagans.

THE life of Tertullian, like that of many other voluminous authors, derives its principal interest from the variety and importance of his writings. Several of his productions exhibit, in a lively manner, his own character, and also point out the state of Christianity in his time. We have already made copious quotations from his admirable Apology, a work which, though not apparently attended with any immediate benefit to the Church, could not fail in some measure to open the eyes of the people to discern the immoral tendency of Paganism, and the excellency of the Gospel. Thus we may conceive that his Apology, and works of a similar nature, were imperceptibly preparing the nation for exchanging their former superstitions for the sacred religion of Christ, and gradually disposing them to hail with joy the edict which a future emperor would issue in its behalf.

Of the other fathers whose lives are recorded in these narratives, there is no intimation that any of

them were ever married ; though their own silence, or that of contemporary authors, especially where there is so general a dearth of materials, by no means proves that they lived a life of celibacy. It is certain, however, that Tertullian was a married man. But we have no information respecting the name of his wife, or of the time of his marriage. Two of his treatises, addressed to his wife, still remain, which display much of the character of their writer. In the first tract he advises her, in case of her surviving him, not to enter into a second marriage. “ We readily acknowledge,” he observes, “ that the union of man and woman is blessed by the Lord, for we know that He devised and granted it to the human race for the purpose of peopling the world, and building up mankind ; nevertheless, it ought to be only a single union. For Adam was the only husband of Eve, and Eve his only wife : there was one woman, one rib.”

In his second tract, Tertullian, with much greater propriety, enlarges upon the evils and hindrances to be expected from a believer’s marrying a Heathen ; and hence urges on his wife, in case she should again enter into the marriage state, the great importance of her being united with none other than a believer. He then concludes with the following pleasing description of the blessedness of a truly Christian marriage :

“ The Church makes the treaty ; the oblation confirms it : when sealed, the angels announce it, and God the Father ratifies it. These two are

one flesh ; and where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit. They pray together, they meditate together, they fast together ; they direct each other, they exhort each other. They are equally in the Church of God, equally in the Divine espousals. In seasons of trial and affliction neither of them conceals any thing from the other, or shuns the other, or is burdensome to the other. They cheerfully attend each other in sickness, and support each other in poverty. Their alms are without grudging, their sacrifices without parsimony, their daily exertions without impediment ! No stolen embraces, no trembling congratulation, no whispered benediction ! They unite together in singing psalms and hymns, and mutually stimulate each other in the high praises of their God. Christ sees and hears such things, and rejoices. He sends them His peace. Where these two are, there also is He ; and where He is, there is not the evil one."

Tertullian's writings, both as it respects his diction and sentiment, are in some places confessedly harsh and forbidding. His style, however, is for the most part keen and sententious ; and his observations are in general solid and important, and well calculated for edification and usefulness. Indeed, from the period of his conversion to that of his death, few of his years appear to have been undistinguished by some useful publication. At one time we find him manfully attacking the armies of the aliens ; at another, rallying his fellow-soldiers

to the standard of the Cross. Now he is exhorting his Christian brethren to aim at greater holiness of heart and life; and now encouraging them in the prospect of imprisonment and martyrdom. Some additional extracts shall be made from his writings, which will probably be considered little inferior in interest to those already quoted from his Apology.

Notwithstanding the attempts which Tertullian had already made, to vindicate the religion of Christ, Scapula, the proconsul of Africa, carried on the persecution with great asperity. Roused, but not dismayed, by the awful scene around him, our author proceeded to address a short tract to the persecutor himself in favour of the suffering Christians, in which there are some circumstances related by him well worthy of attention. He mentions, as an indubitable fact, that the emperor Severus had been cured of a dangerous sickness by the application of oil, which was used by a Christian of the name of Proculus, who remained, till the time of his death, in the palace; and that in consequence of this cure the emperor was for several years friendly to the Christians, and even conferred special marks of favour upon some who had embraced their religion. He also states, that, during a season of fierce persecution in Asia, all the Christians of the district voluntarily presented themselves in a body before the tribunal of Antoninus the proconsul. Their object in this apparently rash act cannot now be ascertained. It is

not improbable that they hoped the view of their numbers and constancy would excite the pity or respect of their persecutor. He, however, either unable to comprehend their motives, or despising them, ordered a few of them to be put to death, and dismissed the rest with these words: "Unhappy men, if you are weary of your lives, is it so difficult to find precipices and halters?"

At length the emperor himself, being alarmed, as some suppose, by the increasing numbers of the Christians, dismissed all his former predilection for them, and issued edicts to suppress the propagation of the Gospel. The effect may easily be conceived. The persecution, which was before partial, and chiefly in places remote from the residence of the emperor, now became more violent and universal. How Tertullian escaped we have no information. He was still, however, actively employed in the cause of Christ and His people. Having on a former occasion been their undaunted advocate in the presence of their enemies, he now wrote a tract for the consolation of such of them as were imprisoned for their religion, wherein he represents them rather as objects of congratulation than of pity.—"They were, indeed, in prison, the house in which the devil confines his own family; but they were now no longer in danger of witnessing the Heathen solemnities, smelling their impure sacrifices, hearing the clamours of the people, or beholding their public debaucheries."

This passage of Tertullian may afford us no

inadequate idea of the very peculiar situation and conduct of the primitive Christians. In every direction, and in every shape, the impure superstition of their Heathen neighbours presented itself to their view, whilst they scrupulously avoided shewing it the most trifling mark of respect, lest they should indirectly be paying homage to the Pagan mythology, or derogating from the majesty of the true God. “The religion of the nations,” observes an historian of great celebrity, “was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools, or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without at the same time renouncing the commerce of mankind and all the offices and amusements of society. The important transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or participate. The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans; and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honour of their peculiar festivals. The Christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus, or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the

hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile ; the Christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the stain of idolatry. Even the common language of Greece and Rome abounded with familiar and impious expressions, which the imprudent Christian might too carelessly utter, or too patiently hear. Such was the anxious diligence which was required to guard the chastity of the Gospel from the infectious breath of idolatry.*

But the most extensive, and, as some suppose, the most valuable, of Tertullian's writings, were those of a polemic nature. With respect to these, M. Balsac remarks, " Though we should grant that his style is of iron, yet the nicest critics must likewise own that from this iron he has forged most excellent weapons ; has defended the honour and purity of Christianity ; quite routed the Valentinians ; and struck Marcion to the very heart."

These tracts are now, indeed, less interesting to

* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

us than some of his other works, as the greater part of the heresies he combats are happily forgotten; although they were, doubtless, of great importance at the time they were written. For such a kind of composition this author appears to have been admirably calculated. We may say of him, in the language of Dr. Johnson, "He was formed for a controvertist; with sufficient learning; with diction vehement and pointed; with unconquerable pertinacity; with wit in the highest degree keen and sarcastic; and with all those powers exalted and invigorated by just confidence in his cause." Thus qualified by nature and education, and clad in the armoury of heaven, he went forth to combat the various errors with which the Church was then infested.

Having remarked, in his *Prescriptions* of heretics, that their errors were foretold by Christ and His apostles, Tertullian refers to the universal consent in doctrines which obtained amongst the various Christian communities formed by the apostles, as affording no small testimony in their favour.

"Would you employ your curiosity in the important business of your salvation?—run through the apostolic Churches, in which are the chairs once filled by the apostles; where their authentic epistles are read, conveying the sound of their voices, and representing their different persons. Do you live in the neighbourhood of Achaia?—you have the Church at Corinth. If you are not far

from Macedonia, you have the Church at Philippi and Thessalonica. If you pass into Asia, you have Ephesus; and if you live near Italy, there is Rome; an authority to which we can readily appeal. Thrice happy Church, which the apostles fully impregnated with all their doctrine, and with their blood! It was in Rome that Peter was crucified, after the manner of our Lord, and Paul beheaded, like the Baptist. It was in Rome that the apostle John was cast unhurt into a cauldron of boiling oil, and afterwards was sentenced to be banished to the isle of Patmos."

But whilst Tertullian joyfully appealed to Rome, as still retaining, with other apostolical Churches, the purity of the Christian doctrine, he was far from attributing to it, or its bishop, any peculiar authority. In his treatise concerning Chastity, which he denominates "the flower of morals, the honour of the body, and the foundation of holiness," he censures, with deserved severity, the extravagant pretensions which already began to characterize the Roman see. "I hear," says he, "that a decree, a peremptory decree, has been issued. The chief pontiff, forsooth, the bishop of bishops, declares, 'I ABSOLVE PENITENTS FROM THE SINS OF ADULTERY AND FORNICATION!' O edict, pregnant with every abomination!" Shortly afterwards he adds, "Who can pardon sin, but God alone? This is, indeed, the prerogative of the Lord, not of the servant; of God himself, not of the priest."

Tertullian's five books against Marcion, who blasphemously pretended that the Law and the Gospel were contrary to each other, and therefore derived their origin from different gods, must have been a truly important work in his day. "In these books," remarks an author, who is conversant in the writings of the fathers, "he establishes the being and attributes of God; shews that evil, both in angels and men, proceeded from their free will; and that the power to commit sin is the consequence of this liberty; that God will not change His councils, but that all the sins and follies, which are the consequence of this freedom of will, shall, in the end, turn to the glory of God; shews the real incarnation of the Messiah, and vindicates the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law against the objections of Marcion and his disciples."*

In his work against Praxeas, he defends the doctrine of the Trinity; but fails, as all must who attempt, by their illustrations, to penetrate the veil with which God has been pleased to conceal this Divine mystery. The following judicious observation on this subject, from the above learned writer, is deserving of serious attention. "There are," he remarks, "many ingenious things in this tract; but when a doctrine of *pure revelation*, as the doctrine of the Trinity is, becomes subject to the common rules of ratiocination, to which

* Dr. A. Clarke's Succession of Sacred Literature.

they are utterly inapplicable, strange assertions, if not erroneous deductions, must be the result.”* Dr. Watts has made a nearly similar observation, though unhappily he did not always himself attend to it:—“ Let us pay the homage of our understandings to the Supreme incomprehensible, by firmly believing what God has plainly revealed; and wait for the favours of higher illumination in the regions of light and immortality.”

In his piece on Shows, Tertullian maintains, that these secular amusements belong to the pomps and vanities of the world, which were plainly abjured by Christians in baptism. He also relates a singular anecdote of a Christian woman being possessed by a devil, during her attendance at one of these Heathen spectacles; and adds, that when the exorcist came to eject him, and demanded how he dared to enter a body consecrated to Christ, the devil boldly answered, “ I found her on my own premises.” Towards the end of this treatise, he strongly inveighs against Christians conforming to the amusements of the Pagan world, and concludes with an animated description of the superior pleasures of the believer.

“ God forbid that His own people should take pleasure in such destructive amusements—that they

* Dr. A. Clarke's Succession of Sacred Literature.

should pass from the House of God to the house of the devil. What! shall those hands, which were lately lifted up in prayer to God, now be wearied in clapping a comedian; or that mouth, which uttered the 'amen' in the sanctuary, be occupied in extolling the feats of a gladiator? Do you still suppose, that the short span of life requires amusements? Why, then, are you so ungrateful, as not to acknowledge and be satisfied with the variety of superior pleasures bestowed on you by the Almighty? What can be more delightful than reconciliation with God our Father and our Lord, than the revelation of truth, than the exposure of error, and the pardon of innumerable sins? What pleasure more sublime than a rejection of pleasure, a contempt of the world, true liberty, an upright conscience, a contented life, and a death spoiled of its terrors? What! are you enabled to spurn the Heathen gods, to expel dæmons, to cure diseases? * Are you favoured with revelations,

* This is a bold appeal of Tertullian to a supposed acknowledged fact, though numbers in our day may not be ready to give him credit for it. But whether, in his time, such miraculous cures and expulsions were wrought or not, he never could have made this appeal to the supposed conviction of the people, if there had not been, from antecedent miracles, actually wrought a certain predisposition in men's minds to believe them. It is foreign to the object of the writer of these narratives to attempt to discriminate between such miracles as were genuine, and such as were forgeries. He cannot, however, refrain from

and do you live to the glory of the true God? These are the pleasures, these are the spectacles, of Christians, sacred, perpetual, and gratuitous!

“ Consider it as your circus to view the course of the age, to reckon the lapse of years, to look forward to the goal of life, to defend the cause of the Church, to cleave to the banner of the Most High, to rouse yourself at the angel’s trumpet, and to glory in the palm of martyrdom. If works of literature delight you, we possess a sufficiency of learning, an abundance of verses, sentiments, and even songs. We have the words not of fable, but of truth; not in illusion, but simplicity. Do you desire contests, and wrestlings? They are at hand, and neither few in number, nor in interest. Behold Impudence overthrown by Chastity; Perfidy slain by Fidelity; Cruelty bruised by Commiseration; Petulance cast down by Modesty! Such are the contests we are engaged in: such the conflicts in which we are crowned! Do you even

remarking, that fictitious miracles, from the facility of their being discovered, and the scandal which such a discovery would necessarily attach to the party concerned in them, must have been highly injurious to the cause of Christianity; or rather, to adopt the nervous language of Bishop Watson, “ that nothing but the recent prevailing evidence of real, unquestioned, apostolical miracles, could have secured the infant Church from being destroyed by those which were falsely ascribed to it.”

wish for blood? You have the blood of Christ. O, what a spectacle, my friends, is approaching, in the triumphant and glorious advent of our Lord! What will then be the exultation of angels; the splendour of saints as they rise from their graves; the reign of the just; and the city of the New Jerusalem!"

CHAPTER III.

Tertullian joins the Montanists.—The sentiments of Montanus.—Tertullian's increasing austerity —His tract on the military crown.—His account of the state of Heathen children.—His character, and death.

A CERTAIN harshness of disposition was too prominent a feature in the character of Tertullian. It was, indeed, his principal defect. It cast a gloom over his religion ; and, whilst it added an undue severity to his censures, greatly diminished their efficacy. “ There is,” remarks Mr. Cecil, “ a hard, dry, and repelling mode of reproof, which tends rather to shut up the heart than open it. The tempest may roar, and point its hail-shot at the traveller ; but he will rather wrap himself closer in his cloak than quit it, till the sun breaks out again.”

This constitutional severity of character unhappily increasing with his years, led Tertullian to impute a laxity of discipline to the general Church ; a charge which few moderns would have brought against it. At length he became acquainted with the Montanists, a sect who claimed extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, and were especially noted for the austerity of their manners, and the rigidity of their discipline. Their sentiments, and the apparent sanctity of their lives,

seduced our unwary African. He became incorporated with them, wrote in their defence, and stigmatized the general Church as natural or carnal.* After some time, however, Tertullian separated from the Montanists also, so that what was remarked of Erasmus seems equally applicable to him:—"He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve." He was not of the general church, he was not of the Montanist church. We cannot doubt that he was savingly united to the mystical Church of Christ, of which the name of every member is enrolled in heaven.

* Montanus, the founder of this sect, was an obscure man, and a native of Pepuza, a village in Phrygia. He made no alterations in what may be termed the essential doctrines of Christianity, but professed that he had a Divine commission to give the *finishing touch* to the precepts delivered by Christ and His apostles. For this purpose he enjoined the necessity of multiplying fasts; prohibited second marriages, and the re-admission of persons into the Church who had fallen into gross sins; condemned any attention to ornaments of dress, or philosophical attainments; and objected to Christians attempting to save their lives during seasons of persecution either by flight or money. After some time he was publicly excluded from communion with the general Church; but was still greatly esteemed by numbers of Christians, who professed themselves his followers. Such is the account generally given of Montanus. It should, however, be received with caution, as almost the whole of our information respecting him is derived from his enemies. We may add, that the account itself bears the appearance of a caricature of religion, though there must have been evident symptoms of enthusiasm and extravagance in Montanus, or he would not have been excluded from the Church.

Dr. Johnson, after referring to a somewhat similar circumstance in the life of our great epic poet, concludes with this important observation : " To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and re-impressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship."

We do not mean to suggest that Tertullian ran into the excess here attributed to Milton, and still less that in the distribution of his time there was no hour set apart for private or family prayer. His proceedings, nevertheless, had a tendency to lead him ultimately to adopt these errors. Disgusted with the laxity of the general Church, and afterwards with the enthusiasm of the Montanists, it is highly probable, if he had been a layman, that he would not only have departed from those communities, but have discontinued the public exercises of religion. He continued, indeed, as a presbyter, to teach and officiate in a separate congregation with a small number of followers. But

this very circumstance occasioned only another unhappy division among the Christians.

Thus Tertullian, who had been so tenacious of the purity and discipline of the Church, became an instrument of creating farther schism;—a schism which was not even palliated by the plea of zeal for any important doctrine, but occasioned by an unhappy attachment to certain uncommanded austerities and bodily mortifications.

But though Tertullian's intercourse with the Montanists did not materially deteriorate the soundness of his creed, it appears to have increased the natural harshness of his character. No longer contented with extolling a life of celibacy, or monogamy, he now branded second marriages with the opprobrium of adultery, and seemed to exclude the unchaste from the possibility of repentance. At the same time, acting according to the literal sense of the apostle's words, that "they that have wives be as though they have none," he separated from his own wife by mutual consent, under the plea of leading a life of greater purity and devotion.

We cannot but regret that this sensible and pious father should have thus tarnished the simplicity of his religion by adopting in so great a degree the gloomy notions of the ascetic; and thereby have countenanced, by his example, those absurd and forbidding habits and superstitions, which afterwards overspread the Christian world. "The virtue enjoined by the precepts, and recommended

by the example, of our Lord, is a human virtue, growing out of the constitution of our nature, and the relations of society; not extinguishing the passions, but regulating them; not a speculative metaphysical theory, but practicable in the daily intercourse of life; not affecting extremes which, from their ostentation, captivate the unthinking multitude, but moderate, consistent, begun in sincerity, and completed with steadiness."*

No production of Tertullian was more characteristic of the man than a piece entitled, "The Military Crown." It was written on the following occasion. At a public donative, presented to the Roman army, every soldier was required to wear a laurel crown. One soldier, who was a Christian, refused to obey the injunction, and carried it in his hand. His conduct was censured by the generality of believers in that day, as tending unnecessarily to irritate the reigning powers. At the same time he was condemned by his officers to be severely scourged, and imprisoned, for his contempt of orders. The soldier, however, found in our author a strenuous defender of his scruples. Not contented with applauding the honest, though misapplied motives, by which he probably was actuated, Tertullian commended the very conduct of the soldier, and published this tract, in which he represents him as a Christian confessor and a martyr.

* Collinson's Bampton Lectures.

But whilst truth obliges us to acknowledge the defects of Tertullian, the same principle requires that we should do full justice to his various and indubitable excellencies. The superficial or prejudiced observer may be disgusted with the ruggedness of the soil; but the attentive enquirer searches out the rich ore beneath it. If this African father possessed not that sympathy with the weak, which forms so beautiful a part of the Christian character, it must be acknowledged, that he was the very reverse of the timid professor, who shrinks at every appearance of opposition; or the heartless one, who requires a thousand reasons to induce him to take a useful step. If he was not a Barnabas, a son of consolation, he was eminently a Boanerges, a son of thunder. If he was not a skilful casuist, he was a faithful herald. From the time of his conversion to his death, neither reproach, nor persecution, nor the infirmities of old age itself, could impede his steadily pursuing what he deemed the path of duty. Let who would be cold, worldly, or heretical, he always appeared serious, and in earnest; ever ready to defend the essential doctrines of Christianity; one who undoubtedly honoured and loved the Saviour; and who daily hazarded his life for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot forbear referring to one work more of Tertullian, as it presents us a melancholy instance of the superstition of Pagans in his day, and affords an ingenious interpretation of a text,

the meaning of which has long been disputed. In his *Treatise on the Soul*, he observes of the children of Heathen parents, that from their very conception they were dedicated to the dæmons whom they worshipped, and relates at large the various impure and superstitious rites which were used on the occasion. He, therefore, affirms that no child among the Heathens was born in a state of purity; and that it was by no means strange, that dæmons should possess, from their youth, those who were thus early dedicated to their service. He then applies to this circumstance St. Paul's words,* "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, &c. else were your children unclean; but now they are holy;"—meaning that a child of a Christian parent, from its infancy, was consecrated to the true God, instead of being subjected to the impure and unhallowed rites of Pagan superstition.†

* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

† "Superstitio Romana deam fluxit Alemonam alendi in utero fœtus, et Nonam et Decimam à sollicitioribus mensibus, et Partulam quæ partum gubernet, et Lucinam, quæ producat in lucem. Ita omnes idololatriâ obstetrice nascuntur, dum ipsi adhuc utero infulis apud idola confectis redimiti, genimina sua dæmoniorum candidata profitentur, dum in partu Lucinæ et Dianæ ejulatur, dum per totam hebdomadam Junoni mensa proponitur, dum ultimâ die fata scribenda advocantur, dum prima etiam constitutio infantis super terram Statinæ deæ sacrum est. Quis non exinde aut totum filii caput reatui vovet, aut aliquem excipit crinem, aut tota novacula prosecat, aut sacrificio obligat, aut sacro obsignat, pro genticiâ, pro avitâ, pro publicâ, aut

How Tertullian endured his last illness, and what remarks he made at the near approach of death, we have no information; a circumstance which every reader must regret. Nothing, indeed, is frequently more interesting or edifying than the behaviour of eminent persons in their last moments; in that solemn scene of life, in which we must all, sooner or later, act so important a part.

We learn from Jerome, that he lived to a very advanced and decrepit age, though he records not the time of his death. It is probable that he was gradually worn out by the decays of nature, and expired about the middle of the third century;—"So he gave up the ghost, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people."

Thus died Tertullian, about the ninetieth year of his age; justly censured for the severity and harshness of his manners; and as deservedly praised for the variety of his talents, the extent of his learning, and the sincerity and steadfastness of his piety.

privatâ devotione? Sic igitur et Socratem puerum adhuc spiritus dæmonicus invenit. Sic et omnibus genii deputantur quod dæmonum nomen est, adeo nulla ferme nativitas munda est, utique ethnicorum. Hinc enim et apostolus ex sanctificato alterutro sexu sanctos procreari ait, tam ex seminis prærogativâ quàm ex institutionis disciplinâ," &c. Tertul. de Animâ.

O R I G E N.

CHAPTER I.

Origen is piously instructed by his father.—Seeks for mysterious meanings of Scripture.—Is sent to the school at Alexandria.—Observations on Clement, its president.—The martyrdom of Origen's father.

WE are informed, that there was a law among the ancient Egyptians, authorising proper persons to sit in judgment on the characters of the deceased, that they might ascertain the degree of praise or censure due to their memories. It may be supposed that such a practice was calculated to produce a happy effect on the morals of survivors. The prospect of posthumous celebrity would stimulate the ingenuous in the career of virtue, whilst the profligate would be restrained in their evil courses by the dread of future infamy.

Every biographer should consider himself as vested with an office similar to that of these Egyptian judges. He should endeavour impartially to weigh the excellencies and defects of the

different subjects of his narratives ; and relate them in such a manner, as may tend to lead his readers to emulate the former, and avoid the latter. These observations are of general application ; but they will be more especially useful in estimating the character of Origen.

There is, indeed, something in this celebrated father most strange and complex. We behold in him unquestionable piety, ardent zeal, unremitting industry, and uncommon disinterestedness, blended with such singularity and austerity of manners, and such daring and fanciful speculations, as have caused ascetics in the succeeding centuries, the self-righteous in the present day, and heretics in every age, to claim him as their friend. The writer despairs of doing justice to so extraordinary a character ; he will not, however, wilfully misrepresent him.

Origen was born in the city of Alexandria, in the sixth year of the emperor Commodus, and in the year of our Lord 185. He was surnamed Adamantius, probably on account of his invincible fortitude in the cause of religion, and his inflexible perseverance in a life of voluntary poverty and mortification. His father, whose name was Leonides, appears to have been in easy circumstances. His family consisted of seven children, of which Origen was the eldest. Of the rest we have no information ; and who, it has been enquired, can hope, that of any progeny more than one shall deserve to be mentioned. Leonides was a Christian

of genuine piety and simplicity of character, and, as will afterwards be seen, a martyr.

Under his paternal roof Origen was instructed in the rudiments of classical literature, and the first principles of Christianity; his pious father, at a very early age, endeavouring to impress his mind with the nature and importance of Divine things. For this purpose he read and explained to him the Sacred Scriptures, habituated him daily to peruse them in private, and directed him to commit different portions to memory. In this pleasing employment he met with every encouragement which the docility and genius of a pupil could afford.

Born for research, and naturally averse to gaiety, young Origen applied himself with astonishing assiduity and perseverance to all his studies; but in those of a religious nature his whole soul was engaged. At the same time his inquisitive mind, dissatisfied with what he deemed a superficial acquaintance with the Scriptures, led him to seek for deep and mysterious meanings. He would also, occasionally, while engaged in attendance on his father's instructions, put such questions to him, as the good man was not always prepared to answer.

Leonides now experienced all that pleasure so natural to a fond parent, on discovering daily increasing manifestations of genius and understanding in a beloved child. It is also to be hoped, that, as a Christian parent, he "rejoiced with trembling." He must have been aware, that piety

is not necessarily connected with precocity of genius ; and that men of eminent talents, though their piety be unquestionable, have not unfrequently been far exceeded in depth of piety and clearness of religious views by persons of very inferior attainments. Whatever were the feelings of Leonides on this subject, he had the prudence to check the juvenile curiosity of Origen, and to admonish him not to dive too deeply into the things of God, but to be satisfied with the plain and obvious meaning of the Scriptures. Happy would it have been for Origen and his learned admirers, if they had strictly attended to this important advice.

Thus from his earliest years did Origen manifest a cordial reverence and love for the Sacred Records, though unhappily blended with a taste for hidden and fanciful interpretations ; a turn of mind which, in after-life, operated but too successfully in obscuring his views of Gospel truth. The fact affords us a striking illustration of a common remark, that the child is the man in miniature ; and that the distinguishing characteristics of each individual are not unfrequently the same through the whole course of life.

A pleasing anecdote may here be recorded of Leonides, which cannot fail to interest every pious parent. He frequently entered his son's chamber when he lay asleep, offered up earnest prayers for the Divine blessing upon him ; and then uncovering his breast, kissed it, with a mingled feeling of affection and reverence, as honoured with the

indwelling of the Divine Spirit. Thus happy did he account himself, in being the father of so promising a son! The author feels a greater pleasure in mentioning this little story, because the silence of contemporary writers has but too effectually deprived these narratives of those delightful details of private life and habits, which constitute the peculiar excellence of biography.

Not to name the school, or the masters of men, illustrious for literature, has been represented as a kind of historical fraud, by which honest fame is injuriously diminished. We will, therefore, briefly trace our young student through the whole process of his education. At a very early age he was committed by his father to the care of Clement, of Alexandria, the president of the famous school in the place of his nativity. Probably its vicinity, not less than its celebrity, induced Leonides to send him there, as he would still enjoy the pleasure of his son's society, and superintend his religious pursuits.

Clement had been a pupil of Pantænus, and had unhappily imbibed his master's love for Gentile philosophy, a passion which never failed to tarnish the Christianity of its possessor. "I espouse," says he, "neither this nor that philosophy, neither the Stoic nor the Platonic, nor the Epicurean, nor that of Aristotle; but whatever any of these sects hath said, that is fit and just; whatever teaches righteousness with a Divine and religious knowledge; all this I select, and call it philosophy."

The following observations of Mr. Milner, on this singular confession, are very judicious.—“ Is it not hence very evident, that from the time that this philosophizing spirit had entered into the church through Justin, it had procured to itself a respect to which its merit no way entitled it? For what is there, even in good ethics, in all the philosophers, which Clemens might not have learnt in the New Testament; and much more perfectly, and without the danger of pernicious adulterations? Doubtless, many valuable purposes are answered by an acquaintance with these writers; but to dictate to us in religion, Clemens should have known, was no part of *their* business.—‘ The world by wisdom knew not God :’—‘ Beware of philosophy.’ The Christian world was now gradually learning to neglect these Scriptural cautions; and Divine knowledge is certainly much too high a term for any human doctrine whatever.

“ He succeeded,” continues Mr. Milner, “ his master, Pantænus, in the catechetical school; and under him were bred the famous Origen, Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and other eminent men. I read the following passage of Clemens, with no pleasure,—‘ As the husbandman first waters the soil, and then casts in his seed; so the notions which I derive out of the writings of the Gentiles serve first to water and soften the earthy parts of the soul, that the spiritual seed may be the better cast in, and take vital root in the minds of men.’

“ This, certainly, is not a Christian dialect. The Apostles neither placed Gentile philosophy on the foundation, nor believed that it would at all assist in raising the superstructure of Christianity. On the contrary, they looked on the philosophical religion of their own times as so much rubbish; but, in all ages, the blandishments of mere reason on such subjects deceive us;—‘ Vain man would be wise.’”*

Under this celebrated teacher the juvenile Origen soon displayed that prodigy of intellectual powers, for which he was afterwards so renowned. Indeed, it is highly probable, that he never would have arrived at such a degree of celebrity, if he had not had such a man as Clement for his tutor. Yet, in a religious point of view, who can help lamenting that so promising a plant should be placed in this ungenial soil. The philosophy of his day may justly be compared to a pestilential blast, which invariably checked the fruitfulness of Christian knowledge, though it did not necessarily destroy its life.

After some years, though the exact period cannot now be ascertained, Origen became the pupil of the celebrated Ammonius Saccas, one of the most learned and eloquent men of his time, and a master of great eminence in the Platonic school. Under him Origen made himself perfectly acquainted with the different sentiments of the Pla-

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ.

tonics, Pythagoreans, and Stoics ; and learned the allegorical and mystical mode of interpretation, which he afterwards unhappily employed in elucidating the Holy Scriptures.

Although constantly occupied by his different studies, Origen resided under his paternal roof until the time of his father's death. We cannot but hope that this very circumstance was not without its benefit, though he did not derive all that advantage we might reasonably have expected. One would have supposed that the recollection of the tender endearments and social pleasures of his father's house would have cast a milder lustre over his subsequent views of religion ; that he would have perceived that Christianity, while it requires the mortification of fleshly lusts, and selfish propensities, demands not that rigour of bodily discipline which he afterwards adopted ; and that while he regarded his pious parent surrounded by his family circle, he would forcibly have been reminded of one of the most eminent of the Old Testament saints, who walked with God after he begat Methuselah 300 years, and begat sons and daughters."*

Thus, like a perennial stream, gently gliding through a picturesque and fruitful region, passed away the youthful days of Origen. Possessed of all the comforts which the house of a tender parent could afford, and delighted with his various stu-

* Gen. v. 22.

dies, the world appeared before him like a distant sun-gilt prospect ; but this cheerful scene was soon to be exchanged for clouds and tempests, whilst he, like a shipwrecked mariner, would in vain reflect upon his former comforts, now irrecoverably lost.

Origen had not arrived at his seventeenth year, when the emperor Severus commenced a general persecution against the Christians. He was just returned victorious from the East ; and the pride of prosperity, united with a desire to gratify his Pagan subjects, induced him to forbid, under the heaviest penalties, the propagation of Christianity. Its professors, however, thought it right to obey God rather than man. They believed also the preaching of the Gospel to be of too much importance to be silenced, or suspended, by the veto of an intolerant emperor. They could not but testify publicly, and from house to house, the things which they had believed and known. The usual cruelties were, in consequence, exercised against them.

The persecution raged every where ; but particularly at Alexandria, where the emperor was then amusing himself with the rarities and antiquities of the place. At length, like some savage beast that had tasted human gore, the tyrant became more ferocious. Not satisfied with inflicting torments on the most innocent of his subjects, he caused their celebrated teachers to be brought from all parts of Egypt to Alexandria, as to a noble

stadium ; where he might be present at their execution, and feast his eyes on their dying agonies. Human nature shudders at the barbarity of the royal persecutor ! To compare him to a ferocious beast, is injurious to the brute creation. The fierce inhabitant of the forest, when satisfied with food, puts off somewhat of his savage nature ; but this merciless tyrant manifested his cruelty, at all seasons, and without abatement.

In the mean time, the sufferings of the martyrs were so far from damping the zeal of Origen, that they seemed only to inflame it. He panted for the honour of martyrdom ; and needlessly exposed himself to danger. At length, learning that his father was condemned to be beheaded, he determined to follow him to prison, and to suffer with him. His mother, having in vain attempted to allay his imprudent zeal by intreaties, one night concealed all his clothes, in order that she might effectually prevent his leaving the house. But, though baffled in his design by this stratagem, he determined, at least, to manifest the spirit of a martyr. For this purpose he wrote to his father in prison, to prevent his being depressed with the forlorn condition in which he was likely to leave his widow and children. One line only of his letter has escaped the ravages of time ; but, as Tillemont justly observes, “ it is worth many volumes.”—“ TAKE HEED, FATHER, THAT YOUR CARE FOR US DO NOT MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR RESOLUTION !”

This conduct of Origen is the more interesting, when we consider that he was now scarcely seventeen years of age. But Jerome properly remarks, "he was a great man from his childhood, and the true son of a martyr. He was one who trampled the world under his feet, having vanquished the love both of pleasure and of riches."

41.

CHAPTER II.

Origen is patronized by a rich matron.—Leaves her house, and commences teacher of philosophy.—His veneration for the martyrs.—A specimen of his allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures.

ON the death of Leonides, the whole of his property was confiscated by the emperor, and his family reduced to the greatest distress. At this juncture Providence raised up a friend for Origen in the person of a rich matron of Alexandria, who having heard of his destitute situation, received him into her family, and treated him with the greatest kindness.

This lady is represented as a woman of piety; and her house as an asylum for the Christians. Among other persons, who now resided in her family, was a man of the name of Paul, who is said to have been notorious for heresy, though at the same time much esteemed by his patroness, and by several Christians, on account of his great abilities and oratorical powers. While Origen remained under this hospitable roof, he was necessarily obliged to associate with Paul. He never, however, would be present during any of his religious exercises; so strongly, even from his youth,

to use his own expression, did he "abominate all heretical doctrines."

What was the nature of this heresy of Paul, or why a lady of piety would patronize such a character; and, indeed, how she was enabled, during a season of bloody persecution, to provide an asylum for the oppressed Christians, we have no information. Several ingenious conjectures might be formed on each of these subjects; but as conjecture is a very unsatisfactory substitute for historic verity, it may be better to leave the matter as we find it. It is difficult also to form an accurate judgment respecting the conduct of Origen in this matter. If the errors of Paul did not interfere with the essential doctrines of Christianity, it was wrong for a young man, under such peculiar circumstances, to make so decided a stand against them. On the other hand, if, as is generally supposed, the heresy of Paul entered into the very essence of revealed religion, he acted like "the true son of a martyr," in manifesting a readiness rather to be deprived of his present provision, and (what to an ingenuous mind would be still more distressing) to be charged with ingratitude to his patroness, than to connive at a gross perversion of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

During his residence at this lady's house, with a resolution equal to his abilities, and a spirit which neither poverty nor persecution could depress, our young student attended to his different philoso-

phical pursuits with astonishing success. It is also truly pleasing to add, that whilst he followed with intense avidity these favourite speculations, he invariably dedicated a considerable portion of his time to a serious perusal of the Holy Scriptures. Origen was not, however, one of those who are content to wear away their time in closets. He entered early into active life; and, till the time of his death, was not more attentive to his private studies, than to an industrious discharge of his public duties.

Scarcely a year had elapsed from the martyrdom of his father, when Origen opened a school, to give instruction in the classics and philosophy; and thereby provided, before he was eighteen years of age, a comfortable maintenance for his mother and himself.

From this period we hear no more of Origen's mother: it is probable that she did not long survive it. She lived, however, long enough to see her son eminent both for erudition and for piety; a privilege with which few parents are favoured.

The reputation of Origen increasing with his knowledge, he was soon regarded as a prodigy of philosophical and biblical learning, and one who was well qualified to give instruction in the Christian religion. He was frequently consulted, though still a youth, by grave and learned philosophers: he was even attended occasionally by some of the principal heretics, whose opinions he impartially weighed; and in several instances was

the honoured instrument of converting them to a more Scriptural creed.

Persecution was still carried on against the Christians; and Origen again manifested his unalterable attachment and veneration for the persons of the martyrs. He visited them in prison, attended them to the place of execution, and publicly embraced them. On one of these occasions he narrowly escaped being stoned to death by an irritated mob. Indeed his life was in such constant danger, that for some time he could not safely pass through the streets of Alexandria, and found it necessary to be continually changing his place of residence. Notwithstanding, he still found opportunities for instructing the people; multitudes of whom crowded to hear him, and were classed among his disciples.

We should rejoice to think that the unadulterated Gospel of Christ was on these occasions invariably inculcated by him. But, alas! the philosophical, allegorical, and mystical method of explaining the Scriptures, which he had imbibed from his acquaintance with the Platonic school, had but too direct a tendency to debase the simplicity of Christian doctrine, and to impair its vital spirit and energy.

It may not be unsuitable, in this place, to give the reader a specimen of Origen's method of interpreting Scripture. For this purpose is subjoined an extract from one of the homilies of Origen,

with Dr. Adam Clarke's judicious observations upon it.

“ Every friend of rational piety and genuine Christianity (says Dr. Clarke) must lament that a man of so much learning and unaffected godliness should have been led even to countenance, much less to recommend, a plan of interpreting the Divine oracles, in many respects the most futile, absurd, and dangerous, that can possibly be conceived. Let it only once be admitted as the genuine way in which the Old and New Testaments are to be understood, and then every thing certain and solid in religion instantly vanishes. For to *allegorizing* and *spiritualizing*, neither *rules* nor *limits* can be prescribed. *Fancy* and *imagination* may sport endlessly in the wildest theories, one man having an equal right to interpret a text according to what he conceives to be its *spiritual meaning* as any other; and, though contradictory in their expositions, they both have equal pretensions to credibility, because there are no *data* by which their interpretations can be examined, as each is left to the boundless range of his own fancy. Again, if it be once granted that the Scriptures are to be interpreted in this way, there can be no certainty that we understand the *meaning of a single text*, unless God should give a special revelation to fix and determine the sense of that which He had already given. But we have no clue of this kind: therefore, on the

allegorizing system, Vaientin, with his sublime nonsense about *Æons* and *Pleroma* ; Origen, with his ingenious *allegories* ; Ketch, with his dull and stupid *metaphors* ; Behmen, with his unintelligible *theosophy* ; and Baron Swedenburgh, with his *internal* and *celestial senses*, and dangerous and indecent *reveries* ; may all put in their claims as *infallible* interpreters of the word of God ; while the *simple of heart*, amidst confusion, confounded by confusion, feels his faith afloat upon a mighty ocean without a star to guide, a compass to direct, or a helm to regulate, his course. God certainly never gave a revelation liable to be for ever misunderstood by such extravagant theories, and fanciful interpretations.

“ A short extract will be sufficient to shew the reader the method pursued by Origen, in explaining the Scriptures. Who would suppose that the account given, Exod. i. 15—22. and ii. 1—10. is to be understood in any other way than as a plain *narration of facts* ? Moses tells us, that Pharaoh, observing that the Israelites multiplied greatly, notwithstanding their severe servitude, fearing lest they should become more numerous than the Egyptians, and possess themselves of the land, or get out of their bondage, commanded the midwives to spare all the female children, and destroy the males. While this commandment is in force, Moses is born ; and, after being hid for three months, his parents, fearing the wrath of this cruel king, put the child in a basket of bulrushes,

smeared with pitch and bitumen, to render it impervious to the water ; and, committing him to the care of Providence, set it afloat on the river Nile, contiguous to a place where the daughter of Pharaoh usually came to bathe. The child was discovered by the attendants of the princess ; was taken up and committed to his own mother, to be nursed for Pharaoh's daughter ; who was all the while ignorant whose the child was, and to whom she had entrusted it. Origen, in his second homily on Exodus, imposes the following interpretation on this simple relation of facts :—

“ *Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is the devil—the male and female children are the animal and rational faculties of the soul. Pharaoh, the devil, wishes to destroy all the males, i. e. the seeds of rationality and spiritual science, by which the soul may tend to, and seek heavenly things ; but he wishes to preserve the females alive, i. e. all those animal propensities of man by which he becomes sensual, carnal, and devilish. Hence,*” says he, “ *when you see a man living in luxury, banqueting, pleasures, and sensual gratification, know that the king of Egypt has destroyed all the males, and preserved the females alive. The midwives are the Old and New Testaments. The one is called Sephora, which signifies a sparrow, and means that sort of instruction by which the soul is led to soar aloft and investigate heavenly things. The other is called Phua, which signifies ruddy or*

bashful, and indicates the *Gospel*, which is ruddy with the blood of Christ, spreading the doctrine of His passion over the world. By these two, as midwives, souls are born into the Church, and educated in spiritual and evangelical truths. *Pharaoh*, the *devil*, wishes to corrupt these midwives, that all the *males*, the spiritual and heavenly propensities, may be destroyed; and this he endeavours to do by *bringing in heresies* and corrupt opinions. But the *midwives feared God*; therefore *He built them houses*: i. e. the two *Testaments* teach and inculcate the *fear of God*, which is the *beginning of wisdom*, and thus the *houses* of the *Church* are built in different parts of the world.—By *Pharaoh's daughter*, the *church* is to be understood, who leaves the *house* of her impious and iniquitous father, according to the word of the prophet, ‘Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.’* Thus she obeys the word, and comes to the waters to bathe: i. e. to the *baptismal font*, that she may be washed from the stains she had contracted in her father's house. Here she finds *Moses in an ark of bulrushes among the flags, daubed over with pitch*; i. e. being filled after baptism with bowels of compassion, *Pharaoh's daughter, the church*, finds *Moses, the law*, in an ark made of reeds, daubed with pitch and

* Psa. xiv. 10, 11.

bitumen, *deformed* and *obscured* by the *absurd* and carnal glosses of the Jews, by which all its beauty and elegance had been concealed: and thus it necessarily continued till the *church* formed out of, and *coming from among the Gentiles*, receives *Moses*, the *law*, as her own child, which being given into the care of those who are spiritual, they strip it of its carnal glosses, and give it its proper spiritual interpretation; then it acquires *strength* and *excellence*; and thus *Moses grows up*, and becomes, through the means of the Christian Church, more respectable even in the sight of the Jews, according to the saying of Moses: ‘I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.’*

“When Moses was grown up, he was brought into the palace of Pharaoh’s daughter: so when we have cast aside our evil ways, and have come to the baptismal waters, we receive *Moses*, the *law*, in its true and spiritual meaning, and see no more in it any thing *base* or *vile*, all being magnificent, elegant, and excellent; and we put it into the *palace of our heart*, and pray the Lord Jesus that He would reveal and shew us more and more how great and sublime Moses is. And this He does by His Holy Spirit, to whomsoever He will. To Him, therefore, be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen.”

* Deut. xxxii. 21.

“ Who (continues Dr. Clarke) can deny this the merit both of piety and ingenuity ; but who, at the same time, does not see, that on this plan of interpretation, the Sacred Writings may be obliged to say *any thing, every thing, or nothing*, according to the *fancy, peculiar creed, or caprice*, of the interpreter ?”*

* See Dr. Clarke's Succession of Sacred Literature.

CHAPTER III.

Origen is appointed president of the school at Alexandria. — His bodily austerities. — The abuse of philosophy no argument against its legitimate use. — The martyrdoms of Rais and Potamiæna.

By this time the fame of Origen had so recommended him to public notice, that he was deemed qualified, even at so early an age, to have the sole management of the celebrated catechetical school in Alexandria, to which he was in consequence appointed by Demetrius, the bishop of the place. Shortly after his entering on his new situation, he deemed it advisable to confine his instructions to religious subjects. The disinterestedness of his conduct is well worthy of notice. By relinquishing his former employment, he necessarily deprived himself of his pecuniary resources; and, being unwilling to receive assistance from those whom he instructed in the principles of Christianity, he sold all his literary works, which he had collected with great care, and contented himself with four oboli [or fivepence] to be paid him daily by the purchaser.*

From this period the celebrated Origen lived for

* Eusebius.

many years a conspicuous monument of industry and self-denial. To disarm concupiscence he submitted to a most painful operation ; and to subdue every bodily craving, he practised the severest mortifications. Familiar with cold, nakedness, and poverty ;—bare-footed, abstaining from wine, and every indulgence of the appetite ;—frequent in vigils and fastings ;—he endeavoured to macerate his body, in order to make, as he used to say, a readier course for the shining of the inward light, and the access of Divine truth. Some of his followers were offended at the severity of his manners, and his unwillingness to receive their gratuities ; and others were disgusted at his forced and fanciful interpretations of Scripture : but there were more of them who regarded both his sentiments and conduct with admiration, and not a few who imitated his excessive austerities.

Whilst the judicious Christian will venerate the invincible integrity, the fervent zeal, and the irreproachable sanctity, of this great man, he will deservedly condemn the severity of that discipline by which he endeavoured to subdue his sensual inclinations, and regulate the affections of his animal nature. Mortification and self-denial, however, are so much neglected in the religion of the present day, that it may be more useful to improve the example before us, by way of excitement to such habits of self-government as are expedient or necessary for the mortification of our bodies and spirits, than to subjoin a caution against such as are violent, and,

therefore, inconsistent with the mild and generous nature of the Christian dispensation. Excessive bodily austerities, it is allowed, have a tendency to generate a servile or self-righteous spirit, incompatible with the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" but it is a far more important consideration that we shall not be able to preserve the purity and spirituality of religion, unless we "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," or run with certainty in the Christian race, unless we "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection."

With respect to the attempt of Origen to amalgamate the doctrines of Revelation with the principles of Heathen philosophy, it may properly be remarked, that it is lamentable to find that this pious father could so strangely have lost sight of the simplicity of the Gospel. And, indeed, had not religion awfully declined in Alexandria from its only proper standard, the plain and simple truth as it is in Jesus, a man, who had thus woven so unnatural a union into his theology, could never have been allowed to give lectures from the chair, or disfigure the pure word of God by his extravagant rhapsodies.

Whilst, however, the reader laments that the religious sentiments of Origen, and those of others in his day, were so unhappily deteriorated by the inventions and conceits of human philosophy, let him not hastily infer that sound learning and rational inquiry cannot be employed about religion

without certain detriment to the interests of real godliness. When men of enlarged minds and extensive knowledge give themselves to the study of the Scriptures, and apply their talents and learning in a legitimate manner, the best results may be expected. Learning cannot be otherwise than beneficial to religion when used in its proper department ; that is, when used to ascertain the true text of the Sacred Volume, by collating the earliest and best manuscripts ;—when used to establish its Divine authority by comparing its contents with the principles of natural religion, and its evidences with those alleged in support of other pretended oracles, and such as might reasonably be presumed would be given in support of a real revelation from God ;—when used to illustrate and explain its history by that of contemporaneous human writings, and to elucidate its various doctrines, promises, and precepts, by a serious, candid, and dispassionate, consideration of its import in all its different books. Human reasoning may also be usefully employed in tracing analogies between the subjects of revelation and those which are discovered by the light of nature, for the purpose of shewing that the truths of Scripture are not contrary to probability, although they are to be received simply on the testimony of God in his Word. But learning and philosophy are alike productive of mischief to religion, when, instead of performing the office of a hand-maid, they usurp the station of a mistress ; when they hold forth the

conjectures and speculations of the human mind, as of the same weight and importance with the truths of God ; or so expound His revealed will as to render it coincident with the principles and doctrines most congenial with the natural and depraved inclinations of men.

How much wood, hay, and stubble, may be built on the true foundation, the great, the fiery day of judgment must decide. Christian charity may hope that not only Origen, whose piety is indeed indubitable, but also many of his followers, had the " root of the matter in them." We are certain, that not a few of them, as well as himself, possessed that noble characteristic of Christianity, " the loving not their lives unto the death," and manifested a readiness to be bound or suffer death for the name of the Lord Jesus.

From the numerous instances of martyrdom which occurred amongst them, we shall merely refer to those of two female converts of Origen, whose names were Rais and Potamiæna. The former, who had been but recently converted to Christianity, was, to use Origen's expression, " baptized with fire, and in those flames mounted up to heaven." The latter, a young woman remarkable for the beauty of her person, but more so for her mental purity and the constancy she afterwards manifested in the hour of trial, after having been threatened in vain, that she should be abused by some of the vilest characters, unless she renounced her religion, was first cruelly beaten,

then covered with scalding pitch ; and, having endured all with a patience worthy of her Christian character, was at length burnt in the same fire with her own mother.

A singular circumstance occurred during Potamiæna's martyrdom. Basilides, a soldier, who presided at her execution, treated her with great humanity, and protected her as far as he durst from the insolence of the rabble. She acknowledged his kindness, and promised to pray to God for his conversion. Not long after, Basilides being required on a certain occasion by his fellow-soldiers to swear profanely, he confessed himself to be a Christian. At first his comrades disbelieved him ; but finding him serious, they called him before the judge, who sent him to prison. Upon being questioned by some Christians, who visited him, as to the cause of his sudden change, he declared, that Potamiæna, three days after her martyrdom, had appeared to him by night, and assured him that she had performed her promise, and that he should shortly die. After this he suffered martyrdom.*

Divine admonitions, by means of dreams and visions, appear to have been not uncommon during this period of the Church. Origen refers to many instances of this sort, having in his mind, no doubt, the story above given, as well as others. " Many,"

* Eusebius.

says he, " have been brought over to Christianity, by the Spirit of God giving a sudden turn to their minds, and offering visions to them by day or by night; so that instead of hating the Word, they have become ready to lay down their lives for it. I have seen many examples of this description."

CHAPTER IV.

The Church for several years free from persecution.—Origen's popularity.—An account of the introduction and progress of philosophy in the Church.—The peculiar notions of Origen.

IN the year 211, God was pleased to liberate His oppressed people from this persecution, by the death of the tyrant Severus. And for the space of thirty-eight years, if we except the short and unquiet reign of Maximin, the Church enjoyed a continued calm. Caracalla, the son and successor of Severus, though in other respects a monster in wickedness, had imbibed, during the years of his childhood, a predilection in favour of the Christians. He had been acquainted with the person who had, in so extraordinary a way, recovered the health of his father, and was also nursed in his infancy by a Christian woman; which circumstances, although insufficient to engage his affections to the Divine Author of that religion, yet excited in him a great partiality towards His disciples. When he was only seven years old, on observing one of his play-fellows beaten, for following Christianity, he could not, for some time, behold his own father, or the father of the child, who was the instrument of that

punishment, without manifesting a degree of generous indignation.

For some years subsequent to this period, Origen not only delivered his lectures without molestation from the Heathen, but was attended by an auditory of learned men from amongst them. Such is the veneration occasionally paid to great abilities, though exerted in an unpopular cause ! Whilst his Pagan hearers perceived in him the admired scholar, they were contented to forget the despised Christian ! It is to be feared also, that his Platonic notions were so intermixed with his statements of Christian truth, and so tinctured his instructions, as to render them more acceptable to the prejudiced and darkened minds of his Gentile audience. Doubtless the purest lessons of moral conduct, and the most sublime doctrines of the Gospel, might often have been extracted from his lectures ; but a teachable, discriminating, and honest mind, the only alembic by which the unadulterated truth could be obtained, was, we fear, but seldom to be expected in such an auditory.

That the reader may form a more correct opinion of the nature of Origen's theology, and of the influence which his peculiar sentiments were calculated to have on himself and his disciples, it may be proper to introduce here a short account of the rise and progress of Gentile philosophy in the Church of Christ. In doing which we shall have an opportunity of entering fully into the meaning and necessity of that caution of the apostle : " Be-

ware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”*

Until the middle of the second century, though the Christians were far from treating human learning with contempt, they wisely avoided the evil of blending it with religion. But shortly after that period, a philosophizing spirit crept into the Church, and spread with an astonishing rapidity in every direction. This foreign plant was first introduced within the sacred enclosure by some Gentile philosophers, who, when brought over to Christianity, still retained a relish for their former studies, and occasionally recommended them to others. Under this description may be classed the celebrated Justin, whose history we have already given.

But of all the early propagators of Gentile philosophy amongst the Christians, Clement, of Alexandria, takes the lead; while his acknowledged abilities and responsible situation, as president of the famous school in that city, gave a wide diffusion and a specious authority to his opinions. The grand object, which he pursued with the greatest ardour, was to form an imaginary coalition between the principles of Gentile philosophy, and those of the Christian religion. To accomplish this purpose, he did not scruple to declare, that

* Col. ii. 8.

the former was to the Pagans what the law of Moses was to the Jews, namely, a communication from God through the administration of angels; and that both religions pointed out the way of salvation, the one to the Pagans, and the other to the Jews. Both, however, at length becoming adulterated with human additions, God was pleased graciously to impart to the whole of the human race a more perfect wisdom through Jesus Christ. But philosophy, being of Divine origin, was not to be superseded by Christianity, any more than Judaism. It was merely to be purified from its different errors; and then the leading principles of Christianity would be found to accord with the maxims of the wisest philosophers.

Agreeably to these dangerous premisses Clement proceeded to avow explicitly that it was not his intention to hand down Christian truth in a simple and unmixed way, but “associated with, or rather veiled by, and shrouded under, the precepts of philosophy.” According to him, the rudiments, or seeds of celestial wisdom, communicated by Christ to the world, lay hid in the philosophy of the Greeks, after the same manner as the esculent part of a nut is concealed within the shell. And hence, according to his theory, it was the duty of Christians industriously to penetrate this exterior covering, so as to discover the true relation between human and Divine wisdom.

In this unhallowed attempt to reconcile and associate the principles of Heathen philosophy with

those of Christianity, many were actuated by a delusive hope of their being by this means able to give a greater dignity to the Gospel, and thereby to recommend it to their learned opposers. Hence they were sometimes led to declare that the difference between Christianity and philosophy was but trifling, and consisted chiefly in the former being of a nature more perfect than the latter. Nor did they adopt this scheme without occasionally meeting their reward. A speculative man would now and then embrace Christianity, as a new species of philosophy, but his religion remained nearly the same, or was of so amphibious a description, as to render it impossible to determine whether he were a Pagan or a Christian.

In this strange mixture of Divine and human wisdom, Plato's sentiments constituted the principal ingredient; as he was supposed to have retained the most genuine opinions respecting the Deity, the souls of men, and the nether world. The errors of Origen, which shall now be briefly related, we have reason to think chiefly originated from his attachment to the sentiments of this celebrated Grecian philosopher.

Origen supposed that men, angels, and devils, originally possessed the same nature; and that the atonement of Christ would be attended with benefit to each of them.

He imagined that good and bad spirits were both of them corporeal; the good being clothed with bodies of a refined texture, and the bad with those

of a more or less dense nature, according to the atrocity of their sins.

He conceived there were divers kinds of evil spirits presiding, so to say, over different vices, and having each their peculiar chief. Legions of dæmons, some of pride, others of anger, others of avarice, or of fornication, laboured incessantly under the orders of their respective leaders, to seduce men from the path of virtue, and to turn them into the ways of sin.*

* This last sentiment, though at first sight it may appear somewhat fanciful, was not peculiar to Origen; nor is it wholly destitute of probability. If the Scriptures teach us that there is an incalculable number of evil spirits or demons resident in the neighbourhood of our earth, and permitted to go to and fro for the trial of the righteous, who are informed that they wrestle not merely "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;" if we learn from the same source, that these spirits exercise a certain dominion over the wicked who "are taken captive by the devil at his will," and in whom he "worketh," instigating and inflaming their corrupt passions, and leading them to such outward crimes, as the restraining grace of God does not prevent; and if we are farther taught that all the powers of hell are under the command of one great fallen spirit, called the devil, or Beelzebub, who employs the rest as his agents;—surely it is not an irrational or improbable conjecture, that these are distributed in different companies, and are dispatched in every direction under heaven, to execute such commissions as are most congenial with their own depraved taste and character; and that while some are spirits which "lust to envy," others are "unclean spirits," and others again severally instigate to pride, anger, and covetousness.—See 2 Pet. ii. 5. Eph. ii. 2. vi. 12. James iv. 5—7, &c.

Proceeding on latitudinarian principles, respecting the voluntary agency of intelligent beings, Origen thought that men might so improve themselves in virtue and holiness as to become, in the order of Providence, not only "like the angels" in their future state, but actually advanced to that rank in the creation. And on the same principles, he believed that angels might be degraded to the inferior rank of the human kind, in consequence of committing offences against the Divine government; and that even evil spirits might finally be reinstated in the condition from which they have fallen.

Following the principles of Plato, he taught the pre-existence of human souls; and derived the doctrine of original sin from their transgression in a former state, instead of simply abiding by the scriptural account of the fall in Adam.

At times he seemed to speak of grace as infused into souls, according to the merits they possessed before they were united to their present bodies; and not unfrequently expressed himself in such a manner as appeared to imply, that merely human endeavours, without the aid of grace, might conduct us to the saving knowledge of God.

He seemed to think it questionable, whether persons who fall into gross sin after they have received the Holy Ghost could obtain pardon; and therefore maintained that Peter had not been a partaker of the Holy Spirit's influence previous to

his denial of Christ; and that, destitute of this, it was impossible for him not to sin. It was probably on the same principle that he would not admit David's sin in the affair of Uriah, in the literal sense of the statement given in Scripture, but had recourse to a hidden and abstruse meaning.

Origen supposed the stars to be animated, and peopled by spirits superior to those who live in this earth. The blessedness of departed spirits (he maintained) consisted in a union with God, but that some time elapses after their separation from the body before they arrive at heaven. His theory was, that the deceased spirit remained on the earth till it was in a measure purified: after that, it was taken into the air, and instructed by angels: it then passed through several places, continuing in each a considerable time; and at last it arrived in the highest heaven, in comparison of which the firmament is but a hell. The more our souls retain of earth in them, the longer he supposed them to be on their journey. According to his gloomy notions, even when they have arrived at the greatest degree of bliss, they are not in a state of security; but may still fall from their integrity and happiness, and be sent into other bodies for a renewed trial. So that, according to Origen, the blessedness of heaven and the miseries of hell may each have their termination.

He believed the present world was created as a

place of banishment for intellectual souls; and he conceived that there were many worlds before this, and will be many after it.

He imagined the paradise in which Adam and Eve were originally placed was in heaven; and the coats of skins, with which God is said to have clothed them, to be merely a figurative description of his confining their souls to mortal bodies.

What a farrago of learned lumber is exhibited in the preceding sentiments of Origen! How grievously different too is this Platonic Christianity from the simplicity of the Gospel; and how opposite the adoption of it to the determination of the apostle Paul "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and not to preach with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but with those which the Holy Ghost teaches."*

It is alleged, in palliation of Origen, that many of his works now exist only in a mutilated state, or a suspicious translation; that he not frequently brought forward these peculiarities rather as the opinions of others than his own deliberate sentiments; and that considerable allowance must be made for his fondness for tropes and allegories: Is it added, that where a man's piety, like that of this eminent father, is unquestionable, instead of venting fulminations against supposed errors, we

* The reader may find, in Du Pin's History of Ecclesiastical Writers, copious and specific references to such of the works of Origen as contain his peculiar notions.

should put the most favourable construction on ambiguous expressions? All this is readily allowed. But, after all, truth obliges us to acknowledge, that there was an extravagancy in some of his notions totally incompatible with the simplicity of Christian doctrine. And it would have been well for the Church if Origen had been contented to form his religious creed on the plain testimony of God in his Word, and to remain ignorant of those mysteries, which Omniscience has not thought proper to reveal to mortals. “The written Word,” remarks bishop Hopkins, “contains whatsoever is necessary to be known in order to eternal salvation; and whosoever is wise above what is written, is wise only in impertinences.”

CHAPTER V.

Origen composes his Hexapla.—His popularity.—He instructs an Arabian governor in Christianity.—Expounds the Scriptures at Cæsarea.—Alexander and Mammæa favourable to Christianity.—Origen's intimacy with Ambrose.—His homilies and commentaries.—He is ordained by foreign bishops, and compelled to leave Alexandria.

IN the year 211, about the commencement of Caracalla's reign, Origen travelled to Rome, being anxious to visit that ancient seat of learning and religion. At that time Zephyrinus occupied the see. Origen, however, soon returned to Alexandria, and resumed his catechetical office.

In the mean time, his fame daily increasing, such numbers flocked to him for instruction, as precluded him from having that leisure for retirement, meditation, and the study of the Holy Scriptures, on which he justly laid the greatest stress. He, therefore, thought it proper to entrust to his friend and pupil, Heraclas, the instruction of the more ignorant, while he undertook the care of his more advanced disciples.

Having, by this time, attained a considerable proficiency in the Hebrew language, Origen purchased from the Jews the most authentic copies of

the original Scriptures;—"probably (says Dr. Clarke) the autograph of Ezra is intended, for the Jews would part with any thing for money"—and not long after he began to compile his valuable collations of different editions of the Scriptures. This work, which was entitled *Hexapla*, contained, in parallel columns, the four versions of *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, the *Septuagint*, and *Theodotion*, with the Hebrew text, in Chaldee and Greek characters, making in all six columns. Some years after, Origen added two other versions, one of which was found by him at Jericho, and the other by one of his scholars at Nicopolis. Both of these works* are now lost, with the exception of a few fragments, scattered through different ancient authors, which were carefully collected and published at Paris in 1713, in two folio volumes, under the title of *Hexapla Origenis*.

The following is an extract from the *Hexapla*, displaying at one view, in collateral columns, the Hebrew original in Chaldee and Greek characters, with the versions of *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, the *Seventy*, and *Theodotion* :

* Different titles have been given to these celebrated works of Origen by different authors. Epiphanius, and some others, from the number of columns, (including the original in Chaldee and Greek characters) have styled the former *Hexapla*, and the latter *Octapla*: whilst others, reckoning the number of versions only, have entitled the one *Tetrapla* and the other *Hexapla*.

These works not only deservedly increased the reputation of Origen, but also drew from all parts numbers of learned men, anxious to reap the benefit of his instructions.

Heretics and Pagan philosophers were now numbered amongst his constant hearers; and not a few were classed amongst his followers. But it is to be feared, that too many of these learned converts still remained ignorant of a saving knowledge of the truth. We hear much of their regard for Origen, and of their reverence for his philosophical attainments; little of their conviction of sin, or love for the Redeemer!

“Superior parts and learning,” remarks Mr. Milner, “always command the esteem of mankind:—but, what are all the labours of Origen which we have now before us, but vain attempts to mix things which the Holy Ghost has declared will not incorporate? The mischief which actually followed was to be expected. Characters were confounded: and henceforward, among the learned, the distinction between Christian godliness and human philosophy is but faintly marked. If Origen had simply and plainly expounded to his learned auditors the peculiar and vital truths of the Gospel, I cannot but suspect that many of them would have ceased to attend his instructions.”*

About the year 217, an Arabian governor, hav-

* History of the Church of Christ.

ing heard of the splendid reputation of Origen, wrote to Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, requesting that he would send him to instruct him in the nature of the Christian religion. Origen willingly undertook the journey; and having executed his commission, returned back to his catechetical school.

He had not, however, long resumed his labours at Alexandria, before he deemed it prudent again to leave that city, in consequence of the intention of Caracalla to attack it. To avoid this emperor's rage, he retired into Palestine, and fixed his residence at Cæsarea. Whilst at that city, though still a layman, he publicly expounded the Scriptures to a number of bishops, at their particular request. This step proved highly offensive to his own bishop, Demetrius, who declared, that it was unprecedented, and commanded him to return to Alexandria. His learned audience hereupon defended him, and proved by several instances that his conduct was by no means uncommon. Nothing, however, which they could advance proving satisfactory to his diocesan, Origen returned to Alexandria, and applied himself with his usual vigour to his former charge.

About the year 219, the emperor Alexander, and his mother Mammæa, came to Antioch. They were both persons of candour and probity; and rather countenanced than opposed Christianity. Indeed the former manifested, somewhat in a singular manner, his good will to the cause of the

Christian religion. We are informed, that he had a domestic chapel, where every morning he worshipped the most celebrated of his predecessors; their statues being placed among those of the Pagan deities. Into this company he introduced Apollonius of Tyana, Jesus Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus; deeming it a suitable mark of respect for them, as persons who had instructed mankind in the various modes of addressing their homage to the Supreme and Universal Deity. It is said, that at one time he designed even to erect a temple to Christ, and to enrol Him regularly in the list of the gods.

Whilst the emperor continued at Antioch, his mother, either from a desire of knowing the truth, or, as it is to be feared, a mere idle curiosity, sent a military guard to escort Origen to her palace. Neither the particulars of his visit, nor the effects produced by it, are known. It is merely recorded by ecclesiastical historians,* that he opened the doctrines of Christianity, gave many demonstrations of the faith of Christians; and, after he had continued with the princess a considerable time, was honourably dismissed by her, to his old charge at Alexandria.

But whilst the emperor and his mother manifested so questionable a regard to Christianity, a purer faith, as well as worship, was openly professed and practised by numbers of their house-

* Jerome and Eusebius.

hold. Bishops and presbyters were now, perhaps, for the first time, seen at court; several of whom, upon the death of Alexander, were involved in the promiscuous massacre of his favourites.

Origen now lived on terms of the nearest intimacy with a person named Ambrose, who had some time before been brought over, by his exertions, from the Valentinian heresy, and who appears to have been a man of a truly devotional spirit.* They united in religious exercises, not merely at the commencement and conclusion of their daily studies, but also during their intervals of recreation and refreshment. Indeed such a vein of piety appears to have run through all their intercourse with each other, that their common conversations not unfrequently wore the appearance of religious solemnities, and their meals resembled sacraments.

Through the earnest desire, and pecuniary assistance of Ambrose, who was in affluent circumstances, Origen was induced to compose homilies and commentaries on the Scriptures; his friend having procured for him several amanuenses and transcribers to write down the dictates of his exu-

* Ambrose was himself a deacon, but whether of the church at Alexandria, or of that at Cæsarea, is uncertain. On account of his faithfulness under persecution, he obtained the title of Confessor. He was also a married man, and the father of several children. His wife, whose name was Marcella, is spoken of by Origen, in a letter to Africanus, as a real Christian and a most faithful wife.

berant mind. For some time Origen had declined to undertake the work through distrust of his being properly qualified for it. At length, however, being overpowered by the importunity of Ambrose, he reminded him, in one of his prefaces, of the solemn account they would both have to give at the day of judgment, and entreated his friend earnestly to pray for him, that he might seek the truth in a right manner, and be enabled to discover it.

A long quotation from one of his homilies has already been laid before the reader, for the purpose of displaying his unhappy fondness for allegory. A few more extracts may here appropriately be introduced, though some of them were evidently not written till after he was ordained. They will manifest the piety of their author, without being deteriorated with the charge of fancifulness. Though himself eminently circumspect in his conduct, and not more recommending the religion of Christ by his preaching than his life, he thus modestly expresses his fears of disgracing his profession by any unsuitable demeanour.—“Many are the devices of the devil. He often lays snares for me who preach in the Church, that he may confound the whole assembly by my conduct. And hence it is that they who are placed in public situations are especially buffeted by the enemy, that by the fall of such a person as cannot be concealed, all may be stumbled, and the faith be obstructed by the infamous behaviour of a few clergymen.”

In several of his homilies Origen refers to that humility of mind, by which the pastors of the Church should be especially characterised. "He that is called to the office of a bishop, is not appointed to be the master, but the servant, of the whole Church." In another place he exclaims, "How many persons that are appointed presbyters have forgotten their humility! They act as though they were ordained, in order that they might cease to be humble; instead of rather cultivating humility, in consequence of their exalted situation!" In another homily he remarks, "More will be expected of me than of a deacon; more of a deacon than of a layman; but most of all will be required from a bishop."

In his commentary on the parable of the marriage of the king's son, Origen makes the following observations: "All are to be invited, good and bad: the bad, however, must not continue so; but changing their garments, and laying aside such as are unsuitable to the wedding solemnity, they must put on wedding garments,—'bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;'—these are wedding garments. Hence, when the King comes in to see the guests, before the dinner He has prepared is set before them, and finds one of them, who, though he had been invited, and had accepted the invitation, had not reformed his conduct, nor put on the wedding garment, He says to him, 'How camest

thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?''*

In one of his homilies from the book of Numbers, having quoted the apostle's words, 'All are not Israel, who are of Israel,' Origen declares that water baptism and spiritual regeneration are not necessarily connected together. "All who have been baptized with water are not also baptized with the Holy Ghost; as, on the contrary, all catechumens are not strangers to, or destitute of, the Holy Spirit. I find in the Divine Scriptures some catechumens accounted meet for the Holy Spirit; and others after baptism unfit for the gifts of the Spirit. Cornelius was a catechumen, who, before he came to the water, was meet for the Holy Spirit; whereas Simon, although baptized, was refused the gift of the Holy Spirit, because he asked hypocritically. Nor would I that you should doubt that there are now some Corneliuses among the catechumens, to whom it may be said, 'Thy alms and thy prayers are come up to heaven.' And again, there are some Simons among the faithful, to whom it may be said, 'O full of all subtilty, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righte-

* Augustine, in his sermons on this parable, has made a nearly similar remark, "What," says he, "is this wedding garment? It is evidently something not common to good and bad. It is not baptism, nor the eucharist, nor faith, nor prophecy, nor miracles; but charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."—1 Tim. i. 5.

ousness.' These things I speak by way of caution for myself, and not for my hearers only ; for I also am one of them that hear the word of God."

The following exhortations to read the Scriptures, selected from different parts of his homilies, will confirm what has already been said of Origen's great love and reverence for the Sacred Writings, and appropriately close our quotations from them :
" Let us read the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and imitate the excellencies for which any are commended, and carefully shun those things for which they are censured. Let us also read the books of the New Testament, the words of the apostles ; and having read them, let it be our care that they be written on the tablet of our hearts, that we may not receive a bill of divorce, but may enter into the holy inheritance."—" Physicians," he in another place remarks, " prescribe certain regimen and medicines ; but whilst we eat this food, and take these medicines, we do not perceive any immediate benefit. So also it is with the Holy Scriptures. We may not, at the time of reading them, derive any sensible advantage ; yet they will ultimately be found profitable for strengthening holy affections, and eradicating those of a contrary nature." In another homily he observes, " If our Lord Jesus Christ find us engaged in studies of this description, He will not only, as it were, partake with us, but, perceiving such a feast prepared by us, He will bring the Father with Him."

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It is probable, that about the year 227 Origen wrote his Treatise concerning Principles, in four books, in which he defends the excellence and profitableness of philosophical studies. This work is still extant in a Latin translation, by Rufinus.* "It contains," says Dr. Clarke, "much curious information, much allegory, and much exceptionable theory on things both Divine and natural."

During the following year Origen was sent by Demetrius into Achaia, to suppress some heresies with which the Church was harassed in those parts. From thence he travelled into Palestine; and, whilst at Cæsarea, he was ordained presbyter by Theoctistus, bishop of the place, and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem. It is conjectured that his own diocesan Demetrius had, through envy, chosen to keep him in the secular state; and that these bishops, sensible of his piety and worth, and anxious that his talents should to the utmost be employed for the good of the Church, proceeded to ordain him.† Origen was now forty-three years of age.

The circumstance of his ordination still more irritated Demetrius against him, who now publicly declared the former indiscreet self-mutilation of Origen, accused him of holding heretical opinions, and used such means as at length made it expedient for him to retire from Alexandria, having first resigned the chair of his catechetical school to

* Rufinus flourished A. D. 390.

† Jerome.

Heraclas, who had assisted him for several years in the duties of that situation. This happened in the year 231.

Shortly after Origen had left Alexandria, Demetrius convened two councils against him. By the first Origen was deprived of the office he had enjoyed there, and forbidden to return to that city. By the second he was deposed from being presbyter, and, according to Jerome, excommunicated. Demetrius also wrote letters to several bishops against him, who in general joined in condemning him, with the exception of the bishops of Palestine, Arabia, Phœnicia, and Achaia, by whom he was still honoured.—Demetrius did not long survive the meeting of the second council: and after his death all animosity excited against Origen appears gradually to have subsided. He was succeeded in his bishopric by Heraclas, with whom Origen had left the care of his school.

CHAP VI.

Origen travels to Palestine.—Writes his Exhortation to Martyrdom.—An account of Gregory Thaumaturgus.—Origen reclaims Beryllus.

BEING now excluded from his native city, Origen sought an asylum in Palestine, where his friends Theoctistus and Alexander cordially welcomed him.* He was here also followed by many of his disciples, who esteemed it a peculiar privilege to be favoured with his instructions. Among the rest, the famous Gregory Thaumaturgus, and his brother Theognostus, attended his theological lectures, which, even in his exile, Origen delivered in his usual manner.

In the year 235, Maximin, during his short reign, commenced a persecution against the Christians. Ambrose, the friend of Origen, and Protoctetus, presbyter of Cæsarea, suffered much in the course of it; and Origen himself, being obliged to retire, wrote an Exhortation to Martyrdom, which he dedicated to them. Dr. Clarke stiles this “an admirable work;” and adds, what, however, may be deemed but an ambiguous proof of its excel-

* A. D. 231.

lence, “ that it incited many in the primitive church to court, rather than shun, martyrdom.”

Having in this work appropriately applied to the case of his friend our Lord’s encouraging declaration to his persecuted people,—“ There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundred fold,” &c. he continues, “ As it was said to those who are of the seed of Abraham, ‘ I know that ye are Abraham’s seed ;’ and again, ‘ If ye were Abraham’s children ye would do his works ;’ so it will be said to your children, ‘ I know that ye are the children of Ambrose ;’ and, ‘ If ye were the seed of Ambrose, ye would do his works.’ And perhaps they will do so, you helping them more after your departure than if you had continued with them.” He afterwards adds, “ Jesus has laid down His life for us. Let us, therefore, also lay down our life, I will not say for Him, but for ourselves, and for those who may be edified by our martyrdom.” At length he closes this tract with the following truly pious and humble declaration: “ These things I have written unto you according to my ability, praying that they may be of some use to you in your present conflict. But if the abundant knowledge of the mysteries of religion, with which you are favoured, especially in your present honourable condition, afford you better counsel, and more suited to your case, so that you can only look upon what I have offered as the

observations of a child, it is no more than I desire. My aim is, not that you should obtain the crown by *my* assistance, but by any means whatever. And may it be obtained by what is most Divine and excellent, and surpassing all human capacity, the words and wisdom of God."

"It is glorious," remarks Dr. Lardner, "to write in this manner to a beloved and excellent friend, upon whom too a man has his chief dependence, as Origen had upon Ambrose. This is true friendship; this is to esteem heaven above the world, and to prefer religion to our own private interest. Such exhortations as these may be reckoned next to suffering for Christ ourselves; some of the best proofs of our integrity, and of our true love both of Christ and our friends."*

It is supposed that during this season of persecution Origen lived in retirement at Cæsarea, where he not only wrote his Exhortation to Martyrdom, but also diligently employed himself in his Hexapla. This celebrated work, which it would necessarily take many years to complete, was by the ancients emphatically entitled, *The Work of the Church*, being at once the fruit of great labour, and a publication of extensive usefulness. It is much to be regretted that it has not escaped the ravages of time, which may be principally ascribed to the immense pains and charge of transcribing it. About this period Origen seems to have finished

* Credibility of the Gospel History.

his Commentaries on Ezekiel, and to have begun those on the Song of Solomon.

Gregory Thaumaturgus and his brother remained five years under the tuition of Origen. On their departure, Gregory delivered an eloquent oration in praise of his tutor, before a numerous auditory; a testimony at once of his gratitude and of his rhetorical powers. Shortly after his departure Origen sent him a letter, in which he seriously exhorted him to read the Scriptures attentively, not to speak or judge of them lightly, and fervently to pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, without whose assistance he could not understand them.*

* It was once the author's intention to have written a separate life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, as he appears to have been a man of eminent piety and superior talent. But finding so much fabulous and dubious matter intermixed with the accounts which are given of him, he was induced to lay aside his design. The following short abstract, however, may not be uninteresting to the reader.

This eminent man, we are informed, was born in Neocæsarea, and educated by his parents, who were Pagans, in their own superstitions. On the death of his father, he became a pupil of Origen, under whose care he remained five years. Some time after his departure from him, he was ordained bishop of Neocæsarea, where there were at that time only seventeen Christians. On his way to his charge he was benighted, and obliged, by the inclemency of the weather, to take up his lodging in a celebrated Heathen temple; upon which the dæmon, who had before presided there, acknowledged to the priest that he could appear no more in that place. Irritated by this circumstance the priest arrested our prelate, and threatened him with impri-

Should it be here asked, how one who could give such excellent advice, and who, we have every reason to believe, seriously attended to it himself, nevertheless fell into so many odd notions in religion? It may be replied, that there is a considerable difference between doctrine and conjecture; and that although the Holy Spirit, when fervently implored, will indubitably keep men from all fatal errors, yet we are not to expect He will preserve them from a roving fancy. Origen's inquisitive mind was always leading him to account for things in their nature unaccountable, and to explain

sonment, when Gregory, to demonstrate his power over evil spirits, wrote on a slip of paper, "Γρηγόριος τῷ Σατανᾷ Εἰσελθε. Gregory to Satan: Enter." After this singular account, the reader will not be surprised that it is added, the devil instantly appeared, and his priest became a Christian.

When Gregory first entered upon his episcopal office, he is said to have been but an indifferent Divine, though a good Christian. But his incompetency in theology was soon remedied. For, as his biographer Gregory of Nyssan informs us, he was more perfectly instructed in the doctrines of Christianity by means of a creed, which he received in a vision from John the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary.

We omit referring to several miracles which Gregory is reported to have performed, and merely add, that the church, which was built by him in Neocæsarea, is supposed to have been the first edifice which was erected for the sole purpose of Christian worship. He is said to have converted all the inhabitants except seventeen, and to have died full of faith and the Holy Spirit; rejoicing that there were in Neocæsarea, at the conclusion of his ministry, no more Pagans than there were Christians at its commencement.

things inexplicable. And because he had no corresponding truth to work upon, he was continually launching forth into the regions of conjecture. Hence, to account for the origin of evil, the fall of man, &c. he imagined a pre-existent state, and made out, as it were, all the machinery of an intermediate one. The Spirit, moreover, though prayed for, will not reveal what is purposely concealed; nor, on the other hand, hinder men from attempting to look into hidden things. Indeed all is conjecture till truth is known; and it is from the womb of conjecture that truth, latent but ascertainable, is at length brought forth by undeniable inference. Only we ought always to distinguish between things of possible and impossible investigation; this, it seems evident, Origen did not. If we have but a little light, we may grope about, and find what we want: but Origen looked into the dark, and delighted himself with the delusive forms that played before him; though it does not appear that he ventured to call them realities. His curiosity was vain, because it could not be gratified; and therefore it was his folly to indulge it.

There are few religious men of a speculative turn who have not occasionally had their minds harassed with regard to some doctrines of religion: but, where the heart is right, such exercises commonly terminate in a more decided attachment to the truth. Thus it was about this time with Beryllus, bishop of Bostra, in Arabia. He was perplexed with some singular and erroneous no-

tions respecting the state of our Lord before His incarnation, and was disposed to deny the Divine Personality of the eternal Word. Origen on this occasion was sent to rectify his views, which office he performed in so satisfactory a manner that Beryllus acknowledged his error, and ever after cordially esteemed him. A circumstance which reflects equal honour on the candour of Beryllus, and the good sense of Origen.

CHAPTER VII.

The outward peace of the Church accompanied with a decline in piety.—Origen writes his book against Celsus.—He suffers severely during the Decian persecution.—Dies a natural death.

RELIGION, it has frequently been observed, is seldom known to flourish during a period of great outward prosperity. In such a season humility and self-denial, so essential to the growth and strength of every Christian virtue, meet with every thing to check their progress, whilst self-indulgence and the pride of human nature are fostered to luxuriance.

The truth of this observation was awfully verified at this period. The long peace which the Church had enjoyed, with only the short interruption of Maximin's persecution, had produced a lamentable declension of vital piety amongst the professors of religion. Origen's account of the state of religion in his time is widely different from any thing that could be found in the two first centuries, and does but too much remind us of later times! Indeed, if we except the two first centuries, we shall find the greater part of professing Christians have, in all ages, endeavoured to reconcile the incompatible service of both worlds ;

and have shewn too plainly, by their conduct, to what master they belonged.

Origen remarks in one of his homilies, “ Several come to church, not for instruction, but diversion : some go out as soon as they have heard the lecture, neither conferring with, nor asking their pastor any questions : others stay not till the lecture is ended ; whilst some pay no attention to the discourse, but entertain themselves together in a corner of the Church.”

About the year 242, Origen was diligently employed in Arabia in confuting the errors of those who denied the intermediate state of souls, which office he appears to have executed with his usual good success. In a numerous assembly, convened on the occasion, he is said to have discoursed with such strength of reason that they who had denied the above-mentioned doctrine acknowledged that their sentiments were erroneous.

About the year 249, our author composed his *Apology for the Christians*, in eight books, in answer to a blasphemous publication of Celsus, an unprincipled Epicurean philosopher. This work of Origen is considered by Du Pin not merely superior to any of his other writings, but also the most complete and best *Apology for the Christian religion* which the ancients have left us. “ In this work,” remarks Dr. Adam Clarke, “ he not only overthrows the objections of Celsus, but destroys their very foundation ; and establishes the Christian religion, not by adducing reasons merely, but by

producing facts—by the prophecies concerning Christ, His miracles, and the holy lives of His disciples. This is the most valuable work which remains of this voluminous writer.”

In one part of his *Apology*, after having acknowledged that miraculous operations were more rare in his day than in the preceding ages of the Church, Origen maintains that they were still occasionally exhibited; and amongst other miracles then performed he especially notices healing the sick, and casting out devils by invocation of the name of Christ.

In his third book he thus refers to one of the grand internal evidences to the truth of Christianity: “We are induced,” says he, “to give credit to the writers of the Gospels, from noticing the marks of piety and integrity which pervade their writings; in which there is no deceit, or artifice, or cunning, or design.”

In his fifth book, he thus describes that happy union of Christian zeal and charity which should ever characterize the conduct of the believer, “Following the doctrines of Jesus, and endeavouring to regulate our thoughts, words, and actions by His precepts, ‘being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat;’ not daring to say injurious things of those who think differently from us. We exert ourselves to the utmost to convert men to the service of the only true God, the Creator of the world, and to engage them to act in all respects

as those that shall be judged : but, considering the words of our Lord, ‘ Blessed are the peaceable, and blessed are the meek,’ we do not hate those who corrupt the Christian religion, nor give opprobrious names to such as are in error.”

In his seventh book, after referring to the outward peace which the Church then enjoyed, he reverts to the rapid progress which Christianity had made during seasons of the severest persecutions. “ By the good providence of God,” says he, “ the Christian religion has so flourished and continually increased, that it is now preached freely without molestation, although there were a thousand obstacles to the spreading the doctrine of Jesus in the world. But as it was the will of God that the Gentiles should have the benefit of it, all the counsels of men against the Christians were defeated. And by how much the more kings, and governors of provinces, and the people, every where strove to depress them ; so much the more have they increased and prevailed exceedingly.”

Origen’s Apology abounds with testimonies to the atonement and divinity of Christ. Referring to our Saviour he remarks, that He was “ possessed of a mortal body, and was God. Who,” he enquires, “ can save the soul of man, and raise it to Almighty God, except the Word, who is God? He in the beginning was with God, and became incarnate for the sake of those who were in bondage to the flesh, and were after the flesh, and otherwise could not behold Him, that He might be received

by them as the Word, who was with God, and who was God?"

In his eighth book, he asserts, in very sublime language, the dignity of the Son of God; whom he terms the brightness of His Father's glory, the express image of His person, the emanation of His power, the pure stream of Omnipotent Majesty, the beam of eternal light, the unsullied mirror of God's energy and goodness. He also remarks, that the true offerings and dedications to God are the souls of men, purified and moulded in conformity to the Divine precepts, in justice, fortitude, temperance, piety, wisdom, and all virtues, after the example of the incarnate Jesus, who was the likeness of the invisible God, and was the only begotten God.

The variety and learning of Origen's writings are the strongest indications of the superiority of his genius, and the intensity of his application. Statesmen and warriors may be rendered illustrious by a happy concurrence of unexpected incidents; but permanent reputation in literature is the unpurchaseable meed of industry and talent.

Shortly after the accession of Decius to the throne, the merciless executioners were once more let loose to commit their ravages upon the Church.* The sword of persecution will lay open the real

* A. D. 250.

character of professors, and separate the precious from the vile. In such seasons those whose hearts are not right with God, nor established by grace, will turn aside from the way of righteousness, and “deny the Lord that bought them.” On the other hand, those whose faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, will “glorify the Lord in the fires,” continue faithful unto death, and become entitled to a crown of everlasting life.

By this time Origen was far advanced in years. But old age neither screened the followers of Christ from the fury of their enemies, nor incapacitated them from sustaining it with fortitude. Origen suffered considerably during this persecution. Imprisonment, chains, the pressure of an iron chair, the distension of his feet to the utmost distance for many days, and several other tortures, were patiently endured by him.

Eusebius refers to the many devout epistles he wrote during this season of suffering. “What words he uttered on these occasions,” remarks this ancient historian, “and how useful to those who need consolation, many of his epistles declare with no less truth than accuracy.” Unhappily these letters have long since been lost. Had they been spared to our own days, they would, we trust, have displayed the meekness and resignation of the Christian, as much as his other writings exhibited the knowledge and investigation of the scholar.

Pleasing is the consideration that there is "a book of remembrance written," which neither time nor violence can deface !

Origen's sufferings, though severe, were not fatal. He survived them a few years, and at length died a natural death. It is to be regretted that we have no account of the closing scene of his existence. Judging from his general character, and from his resignation and piety during the Decian persecution, we may conceive that his last moments were those in which he was most alive to God ; and that he regarded the awful visage of the king of terrors as if it had been the face of an angel.

" The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven—
You see the man, you see his hold of heaven.—
Heaven waits not the last moment ; owns her friends
On this side death, and points them out to men."

Origen died at Tyre, in the seventieth year of his age, and in the year of our Lord 254.

Origen was a man of superior talent, indefatigable industry, eminent disinterestedness, and genuine piety. He spent his days in communicating religious instruction to others, and his nights in prayer and study, allowing himself but little sleep, and that generally on the bare ground. As a writer, Jerome has remarked, he exceeded the most laborious of the Greeks and Latins ; and adds, that to

obtain Origen's knowledge of the Scripture, he would willingly endure all the obloquy he met with. His fondness for the writings of Plato, united to a naturally inquisitive mind, at times carried him beyond the sacred bounds of Scriptural orthodoxy. But so far was he from intentionally encouraging heresy, that the Church found in him a most faithful and zealous defender, and heretics as sturdy and successful an opponent. During a long life he maintained an irreproachable character, and that not only in seasons of poverty, persecution, and torture, but also under the severer trial of a splendid reputation. "Some there are," he remarks, with equal humility and truth, "who love us more than we deserve, and speak more advantageously of us and our performances than we approve of; whilst others calumniate our discourses, by accusing us of sentiments we never held. Neither of these keep to the rule of justice: the one deviates from hatred, the other from partiality."

"The opinions of every man," it has been said, "must be learned from himself; concerning his practice, it is safest to trust the evidence of others. Where these testimonies concur, no higher degree of historical certainty can be obtained."* Let us try the sentiments and conduct of Origen by these tests, and we shall find that their concurring testimony proves, that he possessed a roving fancy,

* Dr. Johnson.

but "an honest and good heart;" that the reveries of philosophy pleased his imagination, but the simple truths of the Gospel sanctified and cheered his soul; that Plato was his companion for an idle hour, but that "God was the strength of his heart and his portion for ever."

CYPRIAN.



CHAPTER I.

Cyprian's original situation and character.—His conversion to Christianity.—His own account of his conversion.—His tracts on the vanity of idols, and testimonies against the Jews.

IF we wish to form a fair estimate of the excellencies of any individual we should consider them not merely in themselves, but also in connection with the times that gave them birth. The man who is enabled to rise superior to the errors of his day, deserves a brighter meed of honour than he who merely excels in those attainments which are sanctioned by the popular suffrage, and are the objects of general admiration. Bearing this in mind we shall regard Cyprian as a star of the first magnitude, rising in a period of general gloom, which had now begun to darken the Christian hemisphere. We shall perceive that his piety had in a great measure escaped the corruptions of the

age, and was also accompanied with a considerable portion of that fervour and simplicity so conspicuous in the religion of the first century.

Thascius Cæcilius Cyprian was born at Carthage, towards the conclusion of the second century, of respectable parents. He possessed an ample fortune, and considerable prospects in life. His understanding, naturally sound, was improved by a good education; but his particular fort was oratory, of which he was a celebrated professor in the city of his nativity.

Dr. Lardner supposes, from a passage of Augustin, that Cyprian taught rhetoric to most of the principal gentlemen's sons residing near him, as well as to those who were educated for the bar. He also conceives, that he composed pleadings, harangues, panegyrics, and other discourses, from which he derived considerable emolument.

Previous to his conversion to Christianity, Cyprian lived in great pomp, and appears to have been very ostentatious in his dress. "His garb superb, and his retinue stately; never going abroad (as he mentions in one of his epistles) without being attended with a crowd of clients and followers." In this manner did Cyprian pass the meridian of his life, possessed of every thing the world considers as desirable, whilst his soul was enslaved to many irregular passions, and obscured by the darkness of Pagan superstition.

The happy period of his deliverance at length arrived. About the year 246 a presbyter, of the

name of Cæcilius, was, under God, the honoured instrument of bringing him to a saving knowledge of the truth. As a token of respect for his spiritual father, Cyprian assumed his name; and Cæcilius manifested the confidence he placed in the integrity and piety of his son in the Gospel, by appointing him, a short time previous to his death, the sole guardian of his widow and children.

From the period of his conversion to that of his martyrdom Cyprian was a remarkable example of purity and self-denial. So tender, also, was his sympathy for the destitute and indigent, that he is said to have sold whole estates for their relief. Such instances of generosity and disinterestedness were by no means unusual in the first ages of Christianity; and, however we may doubt the propriety or prudence of such a conduct, especially as we are ignorant of the circumstances which gave birth to it in particular instances, we must admire the principle which could lead men freely to make such sacrifices for the benefit of their fellow-creatures.

Cyprian's progress in Divine knowledge was remarkable. Instead of being led on, like most others, by slow and regular steps, he appears almost immediately to have arrived at maturity; whilst in a great measure he happily avoided that philosophizing spirit which tarnished the religion of his Eastern brethren. To adopt the tumid but expressive language of his deacon and biographer Pontius:—"No one expects to reap as soon as

he has sown. No one dreams of a vintage the moment after he has prepared the ground for it; no one seeks for ripe fruit from a tree, which he has just planted. But in him there was a concurrence of all these incredible circumstances: in him, if we may venture to affirm what will so hardly meet with credit, the harvest came, in a manner, before the seed-time; the vintage before the grape was budded; and ripe fruit before the tree was well rooted in the ground."

Our purpose in quoting this passage is not to sanction the eulogy, which the author of it seems to have pronounced upon this distinguished convert; but to proclaim the praise justly due to the grace of God which was displayed in him, and to direct the attention of the reader to the power and efficacy of that religion, which made the impure, haughty, and ambitious Cyprian eminently chaste, humble, and spiritual.

We may here also appropriately observe, that the operations of Divine grace are admirably adapted to the peculiar character of the recipient. The philosophic Justin was led by a slow and painful research to a saving knowledge of the truth, whilst the fervid Cyprian was carried, as it were, by a single effort, from the gloomy depths of Pagan impurity to the triumphant heights of Christian holiness. Each, however, was equally indebted to Divine mercy. Conversion, if it be but genuine, is alike the Spirit's work, whether effected by a long succession of intermediate causes,

or produced by the more immediate and obvious interposition of God. It is a truth never to be forgotten, that “every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.”

Although Cyprian exhibits no marks of very extensive learning, he evidently possessed a sound judgment, and a cultivated mind. He had also read with considerable attention the instructive volume of human life; and, from a deep acquaintance with his own heart, he was enabled to form no incorrect opinion of that of others. To adopt the truly appropriate language of Newton, “He had found the way of transgressors to be hard; and he could describe the present attending evils, and the alarming danger of the path if persisted in, not merely from what he had read, but from what he had felt. He knew the depravity of human nature, not as a man who, by inspecting a map, can form some confused ideas of a country which he never saw; but as one who had long lived in the land, and had explored it with attention. And a sense of the love of Christ to himself filled him with love and compassion to the souls of men. Like a traveller who had mistaken his way, when the Lord was pleased to bring him into the right road, he redoubled his speed; and his diligence in redeeming the uncertain remainder of his time has seldom been equalled.*”

* Newton's Life of Grimshaw.

An extract from one of his letters will afford us a delightful view of the happy state of Cyprian's mind at this period. It was written by him, shortly after his conversion, to an intimate friend, whom he affectionately urges to seek after that satisfactory acquaintance with God, which he had obtained, and which he could not but wish every one else should enjoy.*

“ I am aware, my dear Donatus, of your anxiety to converse with me. You turn away your eyes from the various beautiful objects that surround you, and fix them steadily upon me. I am afraid that your affection for me leads you to anticipate greater profit than you ought reasonably to expect. My abilities are far from resembling the luxuriant vine teeming with plenty : they are poor and unfruitful. I will, however, make the attempt ; and the subject-matter is all on my side. Let plausible arts of ambition be adopted in courts of judicature ; but when we speak of the Lord God, plainness and sincerity, not the powers of oratory, should be used. Hear, then, things not eloquent, but important ; not flattering and polished, but faithful and sincere. Thus should the Divine goodness be celebrated. Hear, then, an account of that which is felt before it is learnt ; which is not collected by a long course of speculation, but is instilled into the soul through the summary teaching of Divine grace.

* Epistle to Donatus.

“ Whilst I lay in a state of awful darkness, tossed about amidst the billows of a tempestuous age, ignorant of my own life, and alienated from truth and light, it appeared to me a most strange and difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain what the Divine grace had promised as necessary to salvation ; namely, that a man should be born again ; and that being animated to a new life, by the salutary washing of regeneration, he should strip himself of what he was before ; and, though the body remained the same, he should in his mind become altogether a new man. How can so great a change, I enquired, be possible, as that a man should suddenly and at once put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him ? These evils are deeply rooted and fixed in us. How shall he learn abstemiousness, who has been used to expensive and magnificent feasts ? And how shall he, who has shone in purple, gold, and costly attire, condescend to the simplicity of a plebeian’s dress ? Can he, who was delighted with the honours of ambition, live private and obscure ? So powerful are the allurements of vice, that intemperance will necessarily invite, pride inflate, anger inflame, rapacity disquiet, cruelty stimulate, ambition delight, and lust precipitate, their former votaries.

“ These reflections frequently engaged my attention, for I was myself entangled in many errors, from which I did not think it possible to be extricated. Hence I yielded to the evil propensi-

ties of my nature, and, through despair of what was better, favoured them as part of my very frame and constitution. But after that the pollution of my former life was washed away by help of the water of regeneration, light from above infused itself into my breast, now purified and cleansed:—after that, through the effusion of the Holy Spirit from heaven, a second birth had made me a new creature indeed, immediately, and, in an amazing manner, confirmation succeeded doubt, hidden things were made manifest, obscurity was turned into light; and what before seemed difficult, or rather impossible, to be effected, now appeared easy and practicable. I perceived that that which was born after the flesh, and had hitherto lived in the bondage of sin, was earthy; and also that that which the Holy Spirit had now animated derived its existence from God.*

* The writer of these narratives feels no inclination to enter into the long contested controversy respecting the nature and efficacy of baptism: he feels himself, however, called upon by the above passage from Cyprian to remark, that the fathers seem to have supposed that a measure of spiritual grace generally accompanied the outward rite of baptism; he says *generally*, for we have already seen (page 278), that Origen has expressly declared that there was no necessary connection between them. Justin Martyr, towards the close of his Apology, observes, “As many as are persuaded that the things taught by us are true, and are determined to live accordingly, after fasting and prayer for the pardon of their sins, are led by us to a place where there is water, and are there regenerated after the same manner that we were regenerated before them; for they are

“ You know and recollect, as well as I do, my conversion from a death of sin to a life of virtue. To speak in one’s own praise is odious ; that, however,

there washed in the name of God the Father and Lord of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.” Tertullian, in his Treatise on Baptism, exclaims, “ Blessed is our sacrament of water, for by it the sins of our former blindness are washed away, and we are made free to eternal life.” He afterwards adds, in rather unguarded language, “ As John, the forerunner of our Lord, prepared His way ; so the angel, [bishop or minister,] who dispenses baptism, prepares the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit by the washing away of sins, which faith, sealed in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, accomplishes.”

The present bishop of Gloucester appears to the writer to have at once so happily preserved the mean between lowering the ordinance of baptism to a mere initiatory rite, and making it almost the whole of religion, and at the same time to have so accurately expressed the sentiments of the early fathers, and those of our own Church on this subject, that he cannot refrain from inserting the following passage from his Lordship’s Charge, and recommending it to the serious attention of the clergy of the establishment :

“ I would therefore wish,” remarks his Lordship, “ generally to restrict the term [regeneration] to the baptismal privileges ; and considering them as comprehending, not only an external admission into the visible Church—not only a covenanted title to the pardon and grace of the Gospel—but even a degree of spiritual aid vouchsafed and ready to offer itself to our acceptance or rejection at the dawn of reason. I would recommend a reference to these privileges in our discourses, as talents which the hearer should have so improved as to bear interest, as seed which should have sprung up and produced fruit. But, at the same time, I would solemnly protest against that most serious error (which has arisen probably from exalting too highly the just view of baptismal regeneration) of contemplating all the

cannot be called an expression of boasting, but of gratitude, which ascribes nothing to the virtue of man, but declares all to proceed from the grace of God. So that now, if we cease from sin, it arises from faith in Him, even as our former sins were justly chargeable to our own depravity. From God alone, I say, we derive all our powers; in Him we live; from Him we receive our strength; and by Him, even whilst in our present state, we are encouraged to look beyond it. Only let fear be the guardian of innocence; only let us take heed that the merciful Lord, who hath kindly shone into our minds with an effusion of heavenly grace, be detained as our guest by the steady obedience of the soul, delighting in Him; lest pardon received beget carelessness, and the old enemy break in afresh.

“ But if you walk in the path of innocence and righteousness—if you proceed with footsteps that do not slide—if, depending on God with all your heart and all your strength, you continue the course, which you have commenced, you will find

individuals of a baptized congregation as converted—as having all once known the truth, and entered upon the right path, though some may have wandered from it, and others may have made little progress—as not, therefore, requiring (what all by nature, and most, it is to be feared, through defective principle and practice, require) that ‘ transformation by the renewing of the mind,’ that ‘ putting off the old man, and putting on the new man,’ which is so emphatically enjoined by St. Paul to his baptized Romans and Ephesians.”—Bishop Ryder’s primary Charge to his Clergy.

that your enjoyments will be proportionate to your spirituality. For no bound or measure can be assigned to the reception of the heavenly gift, as is the case with earthly benefits. The Holy Spirit, copiously streaming forth, is confined to no limits, restrained by no barriers ; but, flowing perpetually, bestows His blessings in rich abundance. Let our hearts only thirst and be open to receive them ; for as much capacious faith as we bring, so much abounding grace do we draw from Him.

“ In order that you may have a clearer manifestation of the Divine goodness by a discovery of the truth, I will present to your view the evil state of the world ; and for this purpose will remove the thick darkness which envelopes it. Suppose yourself for a short time withdrawn to the top of a high mountain, inspecting from thence the appearance of things below you, and viewing them with the indifference of a person unconcerned in the various fluctuations of the world : you will then pity mankind ; and, sensible of your own mercies, you will be more thankful to God, and more joyful for your escape.”

Cyprian then proceeds to describe the vices and the miseries of the world ; and, afterwards, in glowing language, contrasts with them the solid peace and exalted piety of a real Christian.

“ He is delivered from the tempests of this restless scene : he is stationed in the port of salvation : he lifts up his eyes from earth to heaven, and is admitted into the favour of the Lord. Such a man

approaches in his thoughts near to God ; and may justly glory, that what others deem sublime and great in human affairs, is beneath his notice. He who is greater than the world can desire nothing, can want nothing, from the world. How firm and unshaken a protection ! How divine a shelter, fraught with eternal good ! He is loosed from the snares of an entangling world, purged from its earthly dregs, and fitted for the light of immortality !

“ When we see what the insidious rage of a destructive enemy was plotting against us, we shall surely be the more compelled to love what we shall be, because we have now learned to know and to condemn what we were. Nor is there any need of price, of canvassing, of manual labour, or elaborate efforts to obtain this highest dignity of man. It is the free gift of God, and may easily be procured. As the sun shines freely, as the fountain bubbles, as the rain moistens ; so the celestial Spirit infuses Himself. Only do you, whom the heavenly warfare has marked for spiritual service, preserve untainted your sobriety and purity by the exercise of Christian graces. Be diligent in prayer and reading. Sometimes speak with God ; at other times hear Him speak to you. Let Him instruct you by His precepts ; let Him dispose of you. Whom God hath enriched none can impoverish. There can be no penury with him, whose heart has once been replenished with celestial bounty. Roofs ornamented with gold, and houses inlaid with

marble, will be vile in your estimation, when you know that your own mind is rather to be cultivated and adorned; that this is a more valuable habitation in which the Lord resides as in a temple, in which the Holy Ghost has begun to dwell. Let us paint this house with the paint of innocence; let us illuminate it with the light of righteousness. It will never fall into ruin through the decays of age; nor will its colour or golden ornaments be tarnished. Whatever is not genuine is precarious, and affords to the owner no sure possession; but this remains in culture perpetually vivid, in honour spotless, in splendour eternal. It can never be extinguished; it will only receive a richer form on its re-union with the body.

“We are allowed,” he continues, “to be cheerful:—but let not an hour of entertainment be inconsistent with Divine grace. Let the sober banquet resound with Psalms; and, as your memory is good, and voice harmonious, continue to perform this office as usual. Your friends will have the better entertainment, if you enliven your meals with spiritual discourse and religious harmony.”

It is probable that during the following year Cyprian composed his Treatise on the Vanity of Idols, and his three books of Testimonies from Scripture against the Jews. The following passage from the former of these tracts is worthy of notice, as it contains a summary of the principal doctrines insisted upon by the early fathers, and gives an affecting account of the forlorn state of

the Jews, not less applicable to them in the present day than in the time of Cyprian.

“ This is the order, this the reason, of Christ’s coming, and of the manner of our salvation by Him. God first manifested His grace to the Jews. Thus their ancestors were just and obedient to the Divine precepts. Hence proceeded the grandeur and flourishing state of their kingdom, and hence the greatness of their nation. But when they became careless, unruly, proud, puffed up with a vain confidence in their fathers, and despisers of the Divine precepts, they forfeited the favour that had been conferred upon them ; and they are now scattered as wanderers and vagabonds over the earth, outcasts from their own soil and climate, and aliens in a strange land. Moreover God had predicted that the time should come when He would select for Himself, from every nation and people and place, more faithful and obedient worshippers, who should imbibe grace from those Divine gifts which the Jews had despised and lost. Hence of this mercy, grace, and discipline, the Word and Son of God is sent to be the Dispenser and Proprietor ; even as He was foretold by all the ancient prophets, as the Enlightener and Teacher of mankind. He is the virtue of God ; He is the reason of God ; He is His wisdom and glory. He was in the virgin’s womb ; and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, having cloathed Himself with flesh, He mingled Godhead with manhood. He is our God ; He is the Christ, who, being the Mediator between two, hath put

on human nature to exalt it to a union with the Father."

Cyprian's Testimonies against the Jews consist of little else than a collection of texts of Scripture, under several heads ; for there is scarcely any thing in it properly his own, beside two short prefaces. In the first he proves, that the Jews fulfilled their own prophecies in rejecting Christ ; in the second, that our Lord's nature was Divine and human ; and in the third, he delivers various precepts for the regulation of a believer's conduct. The following extract from the second book is important, as it affords an indubitable proof of Cyprian's belief in our Lord's divinity, and also comprises a judicious collection of Scriptural authorities on that subject.

" In Genesis : God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there ; and make there an altar unto that God who appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Also in Isaiah : Thus saith the Lord God of Sabaoth, The labour of Egypt, and the merchandize of the Ethiopians, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto Thee, and they shall be Thy servants, and they shall come after Thee bound with chains ; and they shall worship Thee, and pray to Thee, saying, Surely God is in Thee, and there is no God beside Thee. Verily Thou art God, and we knew it not, O God of Israel, the Saviour. Again, in the same author : The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord ; make straight the paths of our God. So

in the xlvth Psalm : Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. So in the xlvth : Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the Gentiles, and will be exalted in the earth. So in the lxviith Psalm : Sing to the Lord, praise His name ; make a way for Him who hath ascended to the West : God is His name. So in the Gospel according to John : In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. So in the same Gospel, the Lord says to Thomas, Thrust in here thy finger, and see My hands ; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. So Paul to the Romans : I could wish that I were an anathema from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, whose are the adoption, and glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises ; whose are the fathers ; from whom is Christ after the flesh, who is over all things God blessed for ever. So in the Revelation : I am A and Ω, The Beginning and The End. I will give unto him that thirsteth of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall possess those things, and their inheritance ; and I will be His God, and He shall be My son.”*

* It seemed proper to retain Cyprian's references to the Psalms, although they do not accord with our own.

CHAPTER II.

Cyprian is ordained presbyter, and soon afterwards bishop, of Carthage.—Pontius's character of him.—He leaves Carthage during the Decian persecution.—The Church of Rome exhorts his people to constancy.—Cyprian's letters to them.

POSSESSED of such deadness to the world, exalted piety, and zeal in the cause of the Redeemer, it is not surprising that Cyprian regarded the work of the ministry as affording him at once a sphere of the most extensive usefulness, and an opportunity of offering up the richest oblation to the Divine Bestower of all good. He was in consequence ordained presbyter within two years after his conversion. Little is known of this period of his life; except what is stated by Pontius, in the annexed quotation :

“ Many things,” he remarks, “ Cyprian did whilst yet a layman ; many when he was promoted to the degree of a presbyter ; wherein, closely following the example of ancient worthies, he laboured, by a scrupulous attention to every religious duty, to obtain the approbation of the Lord.

“ It was his custom, when he read of any one being particularly commended by God, to lead us to enquire what were the circumstances which ren-

dered him so pleasing to the Most High. If Job, for instance, were referred to, who is so famous for the testimony borne to him by God, as His faithful worshipper, and one whose fellow could not be found on the earth, Cyprian would exhort us to imitate him ; that, by following his example, we might also obtain the same honourable testimony. ‘ Job,’ he would observe, ‘ was raised so much above the loss of his fortune, and derived such profit from his graces which were then called into exercise, as scarcely to appear sensible of those temporal calamities which attended his religion. Neither want nor affliction were able to break his spirit. His wife’s persuasions did not seduce him ; nor did the dreadful sufferings of his body disconcert him : but his piety maintained its ground, being too well founded to be shaken by any of these tempests. No temptation or attack of the devil could overpower him, or cause him to withhold his grateful acknowledgments from God amidst all his trials. His house was open to every comer. No widow ever departed with her bosom empty ; no traveller, who was ignorant of the road, was dismissed without a guide. The weak found support, and the lame were conveyed by him on their journey ; and whomsoever the hand of the powerful had oppressed he stepped in to rescue. Thus (Cyprian would say) should they act who desire to please God.’ And so, referring to the examples of all the most eminent saints, and transcribing them

into his own practice, he became himself a pattern for imitation."

Shortly after his being ordained presbyter, he was chosen bishop of Carthage, by the general and earnest desire of the people. Five presbyters, however, opposed his election, who afterwards occasioned him no small uneasiness. The prospect of his elevation to the episcopate afforded Cyprian no satisfaction. He considered himself inadequate to the discharge of its important duties; and earnestly requested the people to select some one, who had been longer in the Church, as more proper to fill so high a station. Afterwards, when he found that his reluctance only made them more anxious to nominate him, he determined to retire, in order that he might avoid farther solicitation. His house, however, was surrounded; his retreat rendered impossible; and at length, through much persuasion, he accepted the painful pre-eminence.

"How Cyprian now conducted himself," exclaims Pontius, "who is able to relate! His piety, his zeal, his compassion, and the steadiness of his whole administration, were all admirable. His very aspect displayed such sanctity and grace as arrested the attention of every beholder. His countenance was grave, but cheerful, and equally distant from the extremes of levity and moroseness; so that it was doubtful whether he more deserved love or respect, though both would readily be awarded him. His garb was of a piece with his counte-

nance, maintaining a happy medium. He had renounced his former secular pomp, but avoided the appearance of affected penury.

“How attentive he was to the poor when a bishop, who, whilst only a catechumen, was so tender of them, deserves the notice of the clergy, who are bound and instructed by the rules of their sacred office to pay the greatest attention to works of charity and mercy. As to Cyprian, the episcopal chair created in him no new dispositions for his office; but found him already possessed of every qualification.”

No sooner was Cyprian advanced to the episcopate than he began to exert himself to the utmost to repress the abuses, which had now arisen to an alarming height in Christendom. In consequence of the cessation of outward troubles, many heartless converts had crept within the sacred enclosure of the Church, who, whilst they professed to approve of the doctrines of Christianity, remained too much like their Pagan neighbours; ambitious, covetous, and sensual. Such persons are not unfrequently found to be more hopeless characters, and more injurious to the cause of vital godliness, than the most open and virulent opposers of religion.

The account which Cyprian, in his Tract concerning the Lapsed, gives of the state of Christianity in the West, is truly lamentable. We might suppose that more modern times had sat for the portrait. Professors of religion were in general

immersed in worldly mindedness, and greedy of gain. Luxury in banquets, and effeminacy in dress and manners, were very prevalent; profaneness was unrestrained, and the intermarriage of Christians and Heathens by no means rare. The most outrageous quarrels and disputes were carried on amongst them, with bitter and malignant acrimony. Even bishops were not only negligent of their flocks, but utterly deserted them. Covetous, fraudulent, and usurious, they travelled through distant provinces in quest of pleasure and gain. Thus the declension, which had long before commenced in the days of peace and prosperity, had now advanced with hasty strides, and called aloud for the persecuting sword of a Decius, and the rigid discipline of a Cyprian, to elicit the latent sparks of Christian fidelity, and to restore the Church to its former purity.

The death of the emperor Philip, who had been the friend and protector of the Christians, introduced, with the change of masters, a new system of government, so oppressive to them, that their former condition, ever since the time of Domitian, was represented as a state of perfect freedom and security, when compared with the rigorous treatment which they experienced under the short reign of Decius.* This prince, who ascended the throne about the time our African prelate entered on his episcopal office, was indeed a most inveterate

* A. D. 249.

enemy of Christianity ; and seemed determined, if possible, to exterminate its very name from the earth. During his reign the bishops of the most considerable cities were removed by exile or by death ; and such was the vigilance of the magistrates, that the clergy of Rome were prevented, during sixteen months, from proceeding to a new election. So great, indeed, was the enmity of Decius to the Christians, that it was supposed he would more patiently have endured a competitor for the purple, than a bishop in the capital.

For some time, however, the persecution appears to have been far less fierce in Africa than in many other places. Cyprian remarks, that it deserved the name of *trial* rather than *persecution*. Nevertheless, on the first promulgation of the impious edicts of this tyrant, before the magistrates sat, or the informers produced an accusation, crowds of nominal Christians ran to exculpate themselves, and to offer the prescribed sacrifices. Too numerous to be all admitted to the proof immediately, they regretted the delay of another day to brand themselves apostate, and begged they might be allowed to attest their infidelity that very night.

At first the venerable prelate continued openly to support his own people ; and wrote consolatory and hortative letters to the suffering brethren at Rome. The persecution, however, soon increasing, and the Pagan populace expressly demanding that Cyprian, the leader of the Christians, should be thrown to the lions ; it became necessary for him to retire

immediately to a place of safety, or to expect the crown of martyrdom. Thus circumstanced, he properly withdrew from Carthage to an obscure solitude, and concealed himself so well, that the place of his retreat was never discovered. He was then proscribed by the government, and the greater part of his property confiscated.*

Mr. Gibbon has well described, and satisfactorily accounted for, the tumultuary proceedings of the Pagans against the Christians, which were especially adopted by them during the season of the celebration of their public festivals. “ Whilst the numerous spectators,” he remarks, “ crowned with garlands, perfumed with incense, purified with the blood of victims, and surrounded with the altars and statues of their tutelar deities, resigned themselves to the enjoyment of pleasures, which they considered as an essential part of their religious worship ; they recollected, that the Christians alone abhorred the gods of mankind, and, by their absence and melancholy on these solemn festivals, seemed to insult or to lament the public felicity. If the empire had been afflicted by any recent calamity, by a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war ; if the Tyber had, or if the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks ; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious Pagans were convinced, that the crimes and the impiety of the Christians, who were

* A. D. 250.

spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the Divine justice. It was not among a licentious and exasperated populace, that the forms of legal proceedings could be observed; it was not in an amphitheatre, stained with the blood of wild beasts and gladiators, that the voice of compassion could be heard. The impatient clamours of the multitude denounced the Christians as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures; and, venturing to accuse by name some of the most distinguished of the new sectaries, required with irresistible vehemence that they should be instantly apprehended and cast to the lions.”*

Cyprian's retreat, however, prevented not his maintaining a constant correspondence with his clergy, or his watching over, with unabated vigilance, the welfare of his own and other suffering Churches. “Absent in person,” he observes, “in spirit and in advice I was active among them.” Many of his beautiful letters were written during the time of his concealment; and are replete with the tenderest effusions of Christian love, and the most important maxims of Christian wisdom. We learn also, from a letter written by the presbyters of Rome to his own Church, in answer to one which he had forwarded to that community, that, though some of the opulent members, and even pastors, had apostatized from the Church

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

at Rome, yet a noble body of confessors held their faith and a good conscience amidst all the pains of imprisonment, torture, and death.

“ We would not,” say they, “ most beloved brethren, find you hirelings, but good shepherds ; for you know how exceedingly awful it would be, if you were not to exhort your brethren to stand stedfast in the faith, lest they be totally subverted by idolatry. Nor do we thus exhort you in words only ; but, as you may learn from many who went from us to you, we sedulously discharge the same duties, through the Divine assistance, though at the imminent hazard of our lives ; for we have before our eyes the fear of God and of eternal punishment, rather than the fear of men, and of a temporary evil. We do not desert our brethren, but exhort them to stand in the faith, and to be prepared to follow their Lord ; even as we have also exerted ourselves to recal to the Church those who went up to sacrifice.

“ You see then, brethren, what you ought to do, in order that those who have fallen may be stimulated by your exhortation, in case they are again apprehended, to confess their Saviour, and thus correct their former error. We advise you, also, to receive again into communion any who desire it, and manifest genuine repentance. The widows, the sick, those in prison, and those who are driven from their habitations, ought to be attended to by suitable persons. And those whose office it is to bury the dead, should consider the

interment of the martyrs as a matter of indispensable obligation.

“ May God, who does all things for those who trust in Him, grant that we may all be found occupied in our respective callings. The brethren who are in bonds, the presbyters, and the whole Church, affectionately salute you, and all who call upon the name of the Lord. We beseech you in return to remember us.”*

Cyprian's letters to his flock are written in the same spirit, and evince him to have been the wise and experienced Christian. He exhorts them to supply the brethren who were imprisoned with every necessary; inculcates the duty of manifesting due subordination to their teachers; cautions the confessors against indulging spiritual pride; and (what will be deemed by those who know the human heart, and the deceitfulness of sin, no unnecessary caution) warns them against ‘fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.’ He even mentions the evil conduct and impurity into which some, who had confessed Christ in the face of torments and death itself, had afterwards fallen.

A few quotations from these letters will unfold the character of Cyprian, and will probably not be unacceptable to the reader. The following salutary and seasonable letter appears to have been written by Cyprian, a short time after his retirement:—

* Epis. 8.

“ Being hitherto preserved by the grace of God, I salute you, dearest brethren, and rejoice to hear of your safety. Since the present posture of affairs does not allow of my being with you, I conjure you, by your faith, and by the ties of religion, to discharge your duties, in conjunction with mine also, that nothing be wanting as it respects discipline or diligence. I beg that their necessities be supplied, who are imprisoned for a glorious profession and avowal of their God, or who labour under the pressure of indigence and poverty, since the whole ecclesiastical fund is in the hands of the clergy for this very purpose, that a number may have it in their power to relieve the wants of individuals.

“ I beg further, that you will use every prudential means to procure the peace of the Church; and that you will direct the brethren, who may charitably wish to visit our worthy confessors, upon whom the Divine goodness hath thus far shone, to do this cautiously, and not in crowds, lest any unnecessary offence be given, and the liberty of access be altogether prohibited. In all things we ought to be meek and humble, as becomes the servants of God; to consider the times, to have a regard for peace, and to provide for the welfare of our people.

“ Most dearly beloved and longed for, I wish you all prosperity, and entreat you to remember us. Salute all the brethren. Victor, the deacon,

and those that are with us, salute you. Farewell.”*

The following letter, addressed to the presbyters and deacons of his Church, contains several practical rules of humility and watchfulness, well deserving the serious attention of Christians in every age:—

“ Let the confessors know what the laws of discipline, as deduced from the Scriptures, require of them; namely, that they be humble, modest, and peaceable; that they preserve their reputation unsullied, and be as exemplary in the whole of their conduct, as in the noble avowal of their faith. Thus approving themselves in all things to the Lord, they will at length be found meet for the glory of a heavenly crown. Let them remember, that the greatest trial yet remains, for it is written, ‘ Praise no man before his death;’† and again, ‘ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;’‡ and our Lord also saith, ‘ He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.’§

“ Let them imitate the Lord, whose humility was never more conspicuous than at the eve of His passion, when He washed His disciples’ feet. The apostle Paul too, after he had been repeatedly imprisoned, scourged, and exposed to wild beasts, still continued meek and humble; nor did his ele-

* Epis. 5.

† Ecclus. xi. 28.

‡ Rev. ii. 10.

§ Matt. x. 22.

vation to paradise and the third heaven excite in him any arrogance.

“ These different duties, I beseech you, instil into the minds of the brethren. The season now, indeed, more particularly requires them to stand upon their guard against the snares of the enemy, who is especially anxious to attack those who have most distinguished themselves for courage, and to revenge the disgrace which he has already sustained from them. The Lord grant that I may shortly be permitted to see my people again, and personally to exhort them to preserve the glory they have acquired.

“ I am grieved to hear that there are some of the confessors who run about idly, foolishly, and insolently ; fomenting divisions, and even polluting by fornication those members which had confessed Christ. Instead of being willingly subject to the deacons and presbyters, they act in so scandalous a manner as to tarnish the glory of many excellent confessors. He, indeed, alone is worthy of the honourable name of a CONFESSOR, on whose account the Church will never have occasion to be ashamed, but always to glory.

“ As to the circumstance concerning which my presbyters have written to me, I can answer nothing by myself. From my first appointment to the episcopal office, I have determined to do nothing without your advice, and the approbation of the people. When, by the favour of God, I shall have

returned to you, we will consider all these things together.”*

In another letter, after having strongly urged the great importance of Christians cultivating a spirit of unity and love, and reminded them of the nature and solemnity of their baptismal vow, he continues: “Let us strengthen one another, with mutual exhortations, and strive to make greater proficiency in the Lord, that, when in His mercy He shall give us that peace which He has promised, we may return to the Church as new men; and that both our brethren and the Gentiles may perceive, that in every respect we are reformed and amended; and may as much admire the future excellency of our morals and discipline as they did our fortitude during the persecution.”†

Having remarked, in another letter, that the sufferings they experienced were just punishments for their sins, he adds, “Let us pray with our whole heart and soul for mercy, for God has graciously said, ‘My loving kindness will I not utterly take from them.’ Let us ask, and we shall receive; and if His answer to our prayers be delayed, because we have grievously offended, let us *knock*; for to him that knocketh it shall be opened, when prayers, groans, and tears, beat at the door.”

He afterwards adds, “Persecution is the examination and test of our sincerity. God would have us to be sifted and tried; but He will not withhold

* Epis. 14.

† Epis. 13.

His help in trials from those who believe. Let us lift up our eyes to heaven, lest this earth, with its allurements and fascinations, seduce us. Let each of us pray to God, not for himself alone, but for all the brethren, even as we have been instructed by the Lord. If He shall observe us to be peaceable and humble, united to each other in love, fearful of His displeasure, and reformed by our present corrections, He will rescue us from the persecutions of the enemy ; and as we have been under His correction we shall receive His pardon. Let us only continue to pray with stedfast faith, and genuine contrition ; let us behave like men placed between the ruins of those who are fallen, and the remnant of such as are still in danger ; between a multitude of the sick, and the few who have escaped the pestilence.”*

* Epis. 11.

CHAPTER III.

The persecution rages at Carthage.—Cyprian's joy on account of the boldness of the martyrs.—He laments the hastiness of the confessors in giving letters to the lapsed.—The Church of Rome writes to him respecting the lapsed.

THE persecution at Carthage was now become truly tremendous. At the same time the awful number of apostates added fresh horrors to the scene, and called forth the Christian graces of their bishop and of the remnant of true believers into full exercise.

We learn from Cyprian's epistles that some were beheaded with swords, or pierced through with spears; others were scourged, tortured by the rack, roasted before fires, and their flesh torn from their bodies with burning pincers; others were at the same time tormented with more instruments of pain than they had members in their body; whilst the lives of some were studiously prolonged, in order that the intensity and continuance of their sufferings might at last lead them to apostatize.

At length, however, Cyprian having heard that many displayed the constancy which true religion will alone inspire in the midst of such persecutions, rejoiced greatly, and represented them as wiping

away, by their faith and perseverance, the tears which the Church had shed for the blood of her children. He conceived even Christ Himself looking down with complacency, fighting, and conquering in His servants, and affording them strength in proportion to their faith. But his feelings on this occasion are best described in his own words. "Christ," says he, "is present in the glorious encounter; encouraging, strengthening, and animating His warriors and confessors. He who once overcame death for us, always overcomes in us." Towards the conclusion of the same epistle he consoles with the following suitable arguments those who, though they had not yet suffered, were preparing in spirit for the crown of martyrdom: "If, through the mercy of God, peace should be restored before the day of your trial, yet let your hearts continue well-affected, and your consciences testify your glorious intentions. Let none of you be dejected, as falling short of those who, having overcome the world, are gone to their Lord by the honourable road of martyrdom. If the Lord be a searcher of the reins and heart, His testimony will be sufficient to secure you the crown for which you are solicitous. Wherefore, my dearest brethren, both conditions are truly honourable and glorious. The safer is that which carries you to God immediately on the consummation of your victory; but the more joyful is that which, after the honour of your confession, allows you still to flourish amidst the praises of the Church.

“ Thrice blessed is our Church, which God has condescended in these times to render so illustrious by the blood of martyrs! She was before arrayed in white by the active piety of our brethren; but she is now clothed in purple by the blood of her martyrs. Amidst her flowers, the lily and the rose are conspicuous. Wherefore let each of us contend for one or both of these honours;—for the white crown of piety, or the purple one of suffering.”*

This holy exultation of Cyprian, however, was not without alloy. He considered the purity and honour of the Church endangered by an irregular and too easy re-admission of the lapsed into her bosom. The confessors, it appears, had inconsiderately granted to them commendatory letters; and the Church, even without the advice of their bishop, had again received them into her communion. This conduct excited in Cyprian some degree of indignation: he confessed that their petulant behaviour had considerably damped his joy on account of the patient sufferings of the martyrs. Such proceedings, he remarked, were quite unprecedented; that after lesser offences a regular time of penitence was required from the members, and a certain course of discipline enforced, and that they were even then only re-admitted to communion by the united imposition of the hands of the bishop and his clergy.†

* Epis. 10.

† Epis. 16.

These censures of our African prelate are not merely to be justified, but to be commended. For surely it was highly for the good of the whole, that some signal mark of humiliation should be affixed to those who had shamefully denied their Lord. "Were not his senses stupified?" exclaims Cyprian, whilst he eloquently arraigns the conduct of those who had lapsed into idolatry. "Did not his speech fail him? Did not his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth? How could the servant of God stand there and renounce Christ, who had a little before renounced the devil and the world? Was not the altar a sort of funeral pile, on which he himself was about to die? Should he not then have fled from it with abhorrence? Unhappy wretch! why need you bring a sacrifice to the altar; why offer a victim with supplications, when you yourself are the sacrifice, you yourself the victim? There you have immolated your own salvation: your faith and hope you have consumed in those fatal fires. Let no one," he afterwards continues, "impose upon, or deceive himself. Mercy belongs only to the Lord. No one can pardon sins committed against God, but He alone, who bore our sins, who suffered for our sakes, whom God delivered up for our offences."*

The power, indeed, assumed by martyrs and confessors, as well as the awful declension of the lapsed, appears, on this occasion, to have been

* His Treatise on the Lapsed.

highly culpable. Pride is the native inmate of every bosom ; even martyrs may feel its workings. It is well for them as for us, that there is One, who bears the iniquity of our holy things. The blood of atonement need be sprinkled on the expiring corpse of the martyr in the flames. But for this the *martyr* would perish, and the *flames* would be eternal.*

During the whole of the persecution, a friendly correspondence was maintained between Cyprian and the clergy of the Church, at Rome. In one of their letters to him they thus graphically describe the impatience and insubordination of the lapsed, and condole with the bishop in his most trying situation :

“ THE PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS, DWELLING AT ROME, TO POPE CYPRIAN, GREETING:†

“ WE have carefully read, brother, the letter you sent us by Fortunatus, your sub-deacon ; and are greatly distressed to learn, that, in the midst of so severe a persecution, you are harassed by the immoderate petulancy and arrogance of the lapsed. But, though these circumstances have greatly af-

* See Hæwys's Church History.

† The unvarying style of equality which pervades the correspondence between Cyprian and the bishops of Rome is deserving attention. Each ascribes to the other the honourable title of POPE, or father, and at the same time addresses him with the familiar appellation of brother.

flicted us, yet the weight of our sorrow is considerably lightened by your firmness and strict adherence to the discipline of the Gospel. You have properly repressed their presumption; and, by exhorting them to repentance, have shewn them the scriptural way of salvation. Indeed we are astonished that, at a time so mournful and unseasonable as the present, and especially when their crime was so great, and their apostasy so scandalous, they should proceed to such lengths as rather to claim their re-admission into the Church as a right than to implore it as a grace, and even to affirm that their pardon was already sealed in heaven.

“ Never cease, brother, in your charitable endeavours to quiet the minds of the lapsed, and to offer the proper medicine to the erroneous, though the inclination of the sick may often dislike the attention of the physician. This wound of the lapsed is still fresh, and its tumours are yet increasing; but we feel assured that, at length, their heat will subside, and they themselves will then be thankful for that delay which was absolutely necessary for a wholesome cure, unless officious persons arm them against their own safety.”*

In another letter, after expressing their complete acquiescence with Cyprian in sentiment, respecting those who had fallen, they give the following important and truly Christian advice. “ Let us com-

* Epis. 36.

fort, fortify, and arm one another with mutual supplications. Let us pray for the lapsed, that they may be raised again ; for those who stand, that they may not be tempted to their ruin ; and for those who are reported to be already fallen, that they may become sensible of the greatness of their crime, and may have the wisdom not to desire a premature and momentary restoration.

“ Let them knock at the doors of the Church, but not break them open. Let them approach its threshold, but not leap over it. Let them watch at the gates of the heavenly camp, but armed with that modesty which becomes those who remember they have been deserters. Let them again take up the trumpet of supplication, but not presume to sound a charge. Let them arm themselves, indeed, with the weapons of humility, and resume that shield of faith which they dropped through their fear of death ;—but let them see that they be armed against their adversary, the devil, not against the Church, which mourns for their fall.”*

* Epis. 30.

CHAPTER IV.

Cyprian returns to Carthage.—Finds his Church rent with schisms.—His judicious conduct.—The Novatian Schism.—Cyprian's conduct on the occasion.—His tract on the Lord's Prayer.

ON the death of Decius, the distracted state of affairs in the empire, rather than a cessation of malice, moderating the persecution, Cyprian returned to Carthage.* His Church by this time was in a most miserable state. Many of her members had apostatized during the late persecution, whilst numbers of those that remained were torn asunder by schisms, and deprived, to an alarming degree, of their former purity.

The chief cause of these divisions was the unruly conduct of five presbyters, some of whom were branded with infamy for immoral conduct. At length one of them, whose name was Fortunatus, was elected bishop in opposition to Cyprian, and his cause espoused by a considerable party. To accommodate the appropriate observation of Mr. Cecil to the case before us, "there is a restless spirit in man, even while the Gospel remains, and is administered by a *Cyprian* : this, with the charm

* A. D. 251.

of a new thing, and the love of being something, somewhere, prompts him to listen to trivial objections, imagined improvements, and specious proposals. He will then stumble at a straw in his former church or minister, as if the evil was *without* him, instead of being, where it generally is, *within* him.

“ Unmindful now of the old advice, *divide and conquer*, he will even sometimes be found crawling from the cedar to the bramble, saying, Rule over us.—I need not remind the reader how the apostle mourned over needless and pernicious divisions of this sort, and laboured to prevent them. To divide for the truth’s sake is the spirit of martyrdom ; to divide for straws is the spirit of schism, and stands among the works of the flesh.”

Cyprian’s strong natural penetration, good sense, and knowledge of human nature, were now called into exercise, and enabled him, in the trying situation in which he was placed, to manifest such promptitude and decision as at once astonished all who were witnesses of his conduct ; and, through the Divine blessing, were attended with incalculable benefit to his people. The case of the lapsed was seriously considered and settled, in a council at Carthage, under the direction of Cyprian and several neighbouring bishops ; whose decision was alike distant from undue severity and unseasonable lenity. Those who manifested signs of genuine repentance were restored ; the case of doubtful characters was deferred ; and at the same time

every method of Christian charity was adopted to lead them to repentance, and facilitate their re-admission. Fortunatus and his flock in a little time sunk into insignificance. Cyprian's just authority was restored: his Church was again brought into a state of unanimity; and at least a partial revival of religion shortly afterwards took place among his people.

A division, however, of a somewhat similar kind in the Church of Rome, in which Novatus, one of his own presbyters, was concerned, occasioned him a series of far greater troubles, and involved him in the most painful disputes.

In consequence of the persecution, the Roman clergy had suspended, for sixteen months, a new election to their see. In the mean time Novatus,*

* He is now generally called Novatian; but Dr. Lardner appears satisfactorily to have proved that his true name was Novatus. The following are the principal arguments adduced by this laborious author in support of his opinion :

1. This presbyter of Rome is generally called Novatus by the Greek writers.
2. There are still remaining in Latin authors traces of their agreement with the Greek writers upon this head.
3. The appellation of his followers shews, that his name was Novatus, not Novatian.—If his name had been Novatian, they would have been called Novatianists; whereas they are always called Novatians, from Novatus.
4. The Dr. knows not of any one, in any age, called Novatian; whereas many were called Novatus.
5. Some learned moderns seem to have supposed that the name of this person was Novatus.

a Roman presbyter, grew high in the esteem of some of the bishops and confessors. He is generally allowed to have been a man of genuine piety, but rigid and tenacious in his ideas of discipline, supposing that those who lapsed during a time of persecution ought to be for ever excommunicated. Two parties were unhappily formed on this subject: the one, which was by far the more numerous, held the more lenient doctrine of restoration on repentance; and the other, the more rigid sentence of final exclusion. The consequence was, what might reasonably be expected, each party elected a bishop. Cornelius was chosen by the former, and Novatus by the latter. A council was, in consequence convened, of neighbouring bishops and presbyters, to decide respecting this unhappy controversy, and to restore peace and unity to the distracted Church at Rome. This object, however, was not gained. Animosity pre-

Dr. Lardner then replies to what he considers the only objection of moment to his opinion,—viz. that his name is always written *Novatian* by Cyprian,—by observing that Cyprian would have it that his own presbyter, Novatus, was the principal author of the disturbances at Rome; and that on this account he called the presbyter of Rome Novatian, as if he had been only a follower of Novatus, of Carthage. Moreover, having often occasion to mention these two presbyters together, no shorter way of distinguishing them could be thought of, than to call one Novatus, and the other Novatianus; which mode of expression the Dr. supposes was also readily adopted by many other Latin writers. See *Credibility of the Gospel History*, chap. xlvii, where Dr. Lardner treats at large on each of these topics.

veiled over charity. Consciousness of power on the one side, and obstinate pertinacity of sentiment on the other, prevented a coalescence of the parties.

On this occasion recourse was had to the advice and influence of Cyprian. It is scarcely necessary to say, that he disapproved of the stern discipline of Novatus and his party ; that he considered the general approbation of the Roman Church as giving validity to the consecration of Cornelius ; and, consequently, represented the appointment of Novatus as unlawful.

So far all was suitable to the wisdom, gravity, and piety, of the prelate of Carthage. But, alas ! he did not stop here. Irritated in the course of the controversy, he occasionally spoke of his opponents with the most unreasonable severity ; and, indeed, during the whole of the contest, manifested more of the spirit of an angry polemic, than of a meek disciple of Christ. So difficult it is to preserve the composure of our mind in the turbulent atmosphere of religious disputation.

“ Unhappily the spirit of self,” remarks a late amiable writer, “ which has too much influence, even in good men, has often made them watchful and vehement in defending or enforcing the peculiarities of their party, greatly to the prejudice of that union and love which our Lord thought fit to appropriate as the discriminating mark of His true disciples. *Hinc bella, horrida bella.*—From hence wars and fightings amongst those whose hopes are

built upon the same foundation, and whose lives and aims are in the main, and in other respects, governed by the same rules. The combatants on both sides profess to engage in defence of the cause of God and truth: the pretence is specious; but even were the point in dispute of great importance, which has not often been the case among those who hold the head, unless the mind of a dealer in controversy be powerfully guarded by humility and love, it soon becomes his own cause. The honour of God, and the cause of truth, are both wounded; and self alone is exalted and gratified by the contest. What fierce invective, what harsh censures, what gross misrepresentations, have we seen in print, in our own time, amongst those who supposed they were contending for the cause of God and truth. These things have made those of the truly godly, who had no part in the fray, weep, and the world laugh. I remember to have met with a shrewd but mortifying remark, of the Monthly Reviewers, some years since: after giving the titles of three or four controversial pamphlets, not very replete with moderation or candour, they added, ‘Will these spiritual gladiators never cease to cut and slash each other for the diversion of the public.’ ”*

It would be neither interesting nor instructive to enter into the particulars of the dispute between Cornelius and Novatus. A single quotation from a work, which Cyprian published during this

* Newton's Life of Grimshaw.

period, will manifest the nature and extent of his mistake. It will also shew—what controvertists do not always attend to---that the man who opposes error in an unhallowed spirit is in danger of introducing greater evils than those he is endeavouring to obviate.

In his Treatise on the Unity of the Church Cyprian observes, “ Whosoever is separated from the Church is joined to an adulteress, and is separated from the promises. He who leaves the Church obtains not the reward of Christ. He is an alien, an infidel, an enemy. It is impossible for that man to have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother. If any one could escape, who was not with Noah in the ark, then may he hope to escape who is out of the pale of the Church. The Lord has given us a suitable caution, when He says, ‘ I and My Father are one.’ And again of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is written, ‘ These Three are One.’* Can any one, then, believe, that this union, substantiated in the Divine nature, and cemented by celestial sacraments, may be severed in the Church, and a schism formed by the collision of opposite wills? The man who retains not this unity retains not the law of God, retains not the faith of the Father and the Son, and retains not the truth which is necessary to salvation.”

* Cyprian, in this passage, evidently alludes to the contested text of the Three Witnesses. 1 John v. 7.

Thus we find a great and good man carried on from a laudable anxiety to promote the peaceful subordination and general unanimity of the Church, into all the acrimony and vehemence of the most contracted bigot. Cyprian commenced with opposing schism; he ended with enforcing intolerance. It is unnecessary to say, that his conduct tended to increase the prejudices of the Novatians, and confirm them in their unreasonable separation. Prompt, vigorous, and persevering, he did not always regulate his zeal in behalf of what he esteemed excellent by the dictates of Christian moderation, or limit his opposition to what appeared censurable by the wholesome restraints of prudence.

Some circumstances, however, may fairly be alleged as palliations of the very strong and bitter expressions employed by Cyprian during his argument with the Novatians. A well founded dread of schism and heresy, and the circumstance of one of his own presbyters being engaged as a prominent character in the opposite party, could not but deeply affect him. After all, it must be acknowledged, that on this occasion he knew not what spirit he was of. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."*

* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

It is generally supposed, that about the year 252 Cyprian composed his Exposition of the Lord's Prayer. This tract, though occasionally disfigured by an inflated style, and an undue fondness for mysticism, is in general written in a nervous manner, and abounds with important and truly spiritual observations. The annexed quotations will give the reader no inadequate idea of its characteristic excellencies and defects.

After having explained at large the meaning of the petition, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, he continues, "A farther interpretation may be given of this passage. Since the Lord commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for those that persecute us, we pray for them who yet are mere *earth*, not having attained a heavenly nature, that the will of God may be done in them which Christ by His great undertaking for the salvation of man, has gone so far towards fulfilling. The disciples, we know, are not called by Christ *earth*, but the salt of the earth; and the apostle asserts the first man to be of the earth, but the second of heaven. Wherefore, following the example of God the Father, 'who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,' and being further admonished by Christ, we so offer up our prayers as to take in the interests of all. As the will of God is done in heaven, that is, in us who, in consequence of our faith, are of heaven; so also we

pray that the will of God may be done on earth ; that is, in them who are not yet believers ; so that they who from their first birth are earthy, may, by being born of water and of the Spirit, become heavenly.

“ Proceeding further in our prayer, we say, *Give us this day our daily bread.* This petition may be understood either in a spiritual or literal sense ; and both, through the Divine blessing, will be useful to us. Christ is, indeed, the Bread of life ; but He is not so to all, but to us only. Wherefore, as we say *Our Father*, because He is the Father of such as know and believe in Him ; so we call this Bread ours, because Christ is our Bread who partake of His body. This Bread we desire may be daily given us ; lest we who are in Christ, and daily receive the eucharist for the nourishment of our souls, should, by the commission of some heinous sin, be deprived of the heavenly Bread ; and, by the sentence of excommunication, be far removed from the prospect of salvation.”

Towards the conclusion of this tract he observes, that the three stated hours, set apart by Daniel and his companions, for the solemn worship of God, bore allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity ; and that each of these seasons was afterwards signalized by remarkable events : the third hour, by the descent of the Holy Spirit ; the sixth, by the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian Church ; and the ninth, by the completion of our

Lord's sufferings, whereby our sins were washed away in His blood, and our souls redeemed and quickened.

He then adds, " But for us, my beloved brethren, besides these anciently appointed times, the hours and reasons for prayer are increased. The morning is sacred to the purposes of devotion, because then the early resurrection of our Lord should be celebrated by prayer. At sun-set, when the day ends, we must again offer up our prayers ; for, since Christ is the true sun and the true day, we are properly reminded, at the close of the natural day, to pray that His light may descend upon us, and that the coming of Christ may afford us the grace of eternal light. Moreover if, in the language of the Sacred Scriptures, Christ be the true Sun and the true Day, there can be no hour in the day, with Christians, exempt from the duty of worshipping God. And when night returns in its appointed course, it can bring no evil in its gloomy shades to those who are engaged in prayer ; for to the children of the light there is day even during the night. Let the Gentiles, then, look to it, who are not yet enlightened ; and the Jews who, having deserted the light, now abide in darkness ; but let us, my beloved brethren, who are always in the light of the Lord, remember the particular advantages of which we are partakers, and make no difference between the day and the night. Being born again by the grace of God, and spiritually renewed, we should anticipate our future employment in the

kingdom of God, where there shall be no night to interrupt the day. Let us be wakeful, then, in the night even as in the day; and since we shall hereafter always be engaged in praying to God, and in praising Him, let us here enure ourselves to unintermitted acts of prayer and thanksgiving."

CHAPTER V.

Cyprian congratulates the Church of Rome on its constancy during the persecution of Gallus.—He writes on a similar occasion to another Church.—His Tract to Demetrian.

The gleam of sun-shine, which had lately brightened the Christian hemisphere, was soon succeeded by a gloomy and tempestuous night. About the year 252, Gallus, who had now succeeded to the throne, commenced a sharp persecution against the Christians, and especially against those who resided at Rome. An extract from a letter of Cyprian to their bishop on this occasion will at the same time shew the fervent piety of the writer, and the exemplary fortitude of the sufferers.

“ We have been acquainted, dearest brother, with the glorious proofs of your faith and constancy; and we have received the notice of them with such joy as if we ourselves were joint partakers of your deserved applause. For as we have but one Church, one mind, and one common interest, what bishop rejoices not in the honours of a brother bishop as in his own? Or what brethren do not every where exult in the common joy of their fraternity? We cannot express how great

was our triumph and satisfaction upon hearing that *you* were the leader of the confession, and moreover that the confession of the leader strengthened a disposition to confess in the brethren; so that while you lead the way to glory you stimulate numbers to be companions of your glory. Thus we are at a loss which most to celebrate, the alacrity and steadiness of your faith, or the harmony and unanimity of the brethren. The courage of the bishop in leading the way was publicly admired; and the union of the brethren in following him was proved beyond contradiction. Whilst there is but one mind and one voice among you, the whole Church of Rome may be said to have joined in the confession. The blessed apostle foresaw, through the Spirit, your faith and firmness; and what he commended in your forefathers is applicable to you their children, and was intended to excite you to imitate them.

“ With terrible violence the adversary made his attack upon the camp of Christ; but was repulsed with a courage equal to his own. He fancied that he had another opportunity of supplanting the servants of God; and that he should find them like raw and undisciplined soldiers, whom he could easily put to the rout. But he soon perceived that the army of Christ was on its guard, sober, and accoutred for the battle; that Christians cannot be conquered; that in dying they are invincible, because they fear not death; that they resist not their

aggressors, because it is not lawful for them, though innocent, to kill the guilty;* and that they readily give up their own hearts' blood in order to depart more quickly from a world so full of wickedness and barbarity.

“ What a gallant spectacle was this under the immediate eyes of God ! What a source of joy to the Church, that her soldiers advanced in the presence of Christ to the attack which the enemy made upon them, not in detached parties, but with the whole army together ! How many of the lapsed were then restored by their glorious confession, who bravely maintained their ground, and derived additional courage from their shame and grief for their former misconduct. Their previous fall may now be justly considered as the effect of sudden tremor, for they have returned to their real character ; and, deriving true faith and strength from the fear of God, they have sought, with a due mixture of patience and zeal, not merely for the pardon of their former sin, but for the crown of martyrdom.

“ For my own part, my dearest brother, since it has pleased God graciously to admonish me of our approaching trial, I cease not earnestly to exhort my people to prepare for it, by watching, fasting, and prayers. These are our celestial arms, which will enable us to maintain our ground with constancy and courage. These are our spiritual

* A plain proof that the Christians still retained their passive virtue under the most unjust treatment.

fortresses, which will afford us protection and security. Let us remember each other in our prayers. Let us be unanimous and united; and let us relieve our pressures and distresses by mutual charity. And whosoever of us shall first be called hence by the favour of the Lord, let our affection be still expressed for our brethren and our sisters, in never ceasing prayers unto the Father for them. Dearest brother, my best wishes attend you. Farewell.”*

No one can refrain from admiring this wonderful display of the genius and power of Christianity. Animated by the spirit of vital godliness, Cyprian regards nothing as important which tends not to promote the Divine glory, and exhibit the excellency of religion; whilst worldly privations, bodily sufferings, and death itself, are subjects of heartfelt congratulation, when instrumental in effecting so important an object!

In another letter to a suffering Church, he writes, “No one is alone who has the company of Christ to solace him in his retreat; or whose heart, as the temple of God, is kept from defilement by His presence. The Christian may, indeed, be assailed by robbers, or wild beasts, among the mountains and deserts; he may be afflicted by famine, by cold, and by thirst; he may be drowned in a tempest at sea: but the Saviour Himself all the while notices the conduct of His soldier, and is

* Epis. 60.

ready to bestow, at the resurrection, that reward which He has assigned to such as are persecuted to the death for His name's sake. Nor is the glory of such a martyrdom disparaged, because he does not suffer publicly and surrounded by spectators, since he still suffers in the cause of Christ."

The holy bishop at length closes his letter with these animating words, "O how great and glorious will that day be, my beloved brethren, when the Lord shall begin to recount His people, and to adjudge to them their several rewards; to send the guilty into hell, to condemn our persecutors to the punishment of eternal flames, and to bestow on us the gracious retribution of our faith and piety. What glory! What joy! to be admitted to see God; to salute Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs; to rejoice in the pleasures of that immortality, which will be assigned us in heaven with the righteous and the friends of God."*

It was probably about this time that our prelate wrote his Tract to Demetrian, a noted persecutor of the Christians. The style and subject are truly Cyprian's. Having exposed the folly of the Pagans in charging the miseries of the times upon the Christians, he displays their own awful condition as persecutors, and affectionately urges them to embrace the religion of Christ, as the only means of avoiding eternal misery.

* Epis. 58.

“ If (he exclaims) neither the judgments nor the terrors of the Most High can turn you to Him, remember that there remain hereafter an eternal prison, a constant flame, and perpetual punishment, where the groans of supplicants will not be heard, because here they disregarded the terror of God’s indignation. Provide therefore for your security and life, whilst you have an opportunity. We offer you the most salutary counsel ; and because we are forbidden to hate you, or to return evil for evil, we exhort you, whilst you have the opportunity, whilst you continue in this world, to labour to appease God, and to emerge from the gross darkness of superstition into the pure light of true religion. We envy none of your advantages, nor do we conceal from you the mercies of God. We return good will for your hatred ; and requite the torments and punishments with which you have loaded us, by directing you to the paths of salvation.—Believe and live ; and do you, who persecute us for a time, rejoice with us for ever.

“ Upon your removal hence, there will be no place for repentance ; nor any possibility of obtaining reconciliation with God. Here life is either lost or secured. Here, by the worship of God and the fruit of faith, provision is made for eternal salvation. Nor let any one be discouraged, either by his sins or his years, from seeking to obtain salvation. No repentance is too late while a man remains in this world. The door of Divine mercy is open, and access to the truth is easy to

those who diligently seek it. Even in the very exit of life, pray for the pardon of your sins, and implore the only living and true God, with confession and faith, for pardon is granted to him who confesses his sin, and the saving grace of Divine goodness is conferred on the believer; and thus may a man pass from the verge of death to a blessed immortality. This advantage is derived from the gracious undertaking of Christ. This is the peculiar trophy of His cross, by which He redeemed the believer even with the price of His blood, by which He reconciled man to God the Father, and quickened the dead, obtaining for them a celestial regeneration. Him, if it be possible, let us all follow. Let us all be found on His roll, and marked with His signature. He opens to us the way of life: He restores us to Paradise, and will at length bring us to His heavenly kingdom. By Him, being made sons of God, we shall live with Him for ever; and, redeemed by His blood, we shall rejoice with Him for ever."

CHAPTER VI.

A dreadful pestilence rages in Africa.—Cyprian's conduct on the occasion.—His Treatise on Mortality.—He makes a collection for the redemption of the Numidian captives.

THE short reign of Gallus was distinguished by a great variety of public calamities. During the present year * a dreadful pestilence raged in different parts of the Roman empire, and especially in Africa, which not merely carried off various individuals, but exterminated whole families. Terrified by this awful providence, the Pagans neglected the last office of humanity, and suffered their dead to remain unburied in the streets.

This was an occasion which Cyprian took care to improve, for bringing into exercise the graces of Christianity. He assembled his people, and expatiated on the subject of mercy. He pointed out to them, that if they did no more than others, no more than the heathen or the publicans did, in shewing kindness to their own people, there would be nothing particularly admirable in their conduct; that Christians ought to overcome evil with good, and to love their enemies after the example of their hea-

* A. D. 252.

venly Father, who makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. "Why does not he," continued Cyprian," who professes himself a son of God, imitate the example of his heavenly Father? We ought to behave in a manner suitable to our birth, and not to disgrace our new relationship; but be solicitous to evidence the genuineness of our sonship by imitating the goodness of our Parent."*

This pious exhortation of Cyprian received additional weight from his own personal piety and active benevolence. He was the first to practise the advice which he gave to others.

"Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his controul
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last falt'ring accents whispered praise."

Animated by his advice and example, the Christians were divided into different classes for the purpose of more effectually relieving the public distress. Those who had property contributed according to their ability; and those who had none, gave, what was still more valuable, their labour, with extreme hazard of their lives. Their Pagan neighbours beheld with astonishment the benevolent influence of Christianity, and had a salutary

* Pontius's Life of Cyprian.

opportunity of contrasting the holy disinterestedness of the Christians with their own selfishness and inhumanity.

Cyprian, desirous of improving every event, wrote on this occasion his *Treatise on Mortality*, in which he feelingly expatiates on the vanity of this present life ; and, in language almost seraphic, describes the blessedness of those who die in the faith and fear of God. “ The kingdom of God, my dearest brethren, is just at hand. The reward of life, the joy of eternal salvation, perpetual gladness, and the possession of Paradise which we had forfeited, are approaching to us, now that the world is passing away. Heavenly and eternal glories are succeeding earthly fading trifles. What cause can there then be for anxiety, solicitude, or sadness, unless faith and hope are deficient ? He only can fear death, who is unwilling to go to Christ ; nor can any one be loth to go to Christ, but he who fears that he will not reign with Him. It is written ‘ the just shall live by faith.’ If then you are just and such as live by faith, and really believe in God, why do you not rejoice on your being called to be with Christ, fully relying on the promise of the Lord.

“ Durable peace, sound tranquillity, and perpetual security, we shall experience in the world to come ; but in this we are in a state of perpetual conflict with our spiritual enemy, and are always on the defensive against his various assaults. Surely then we ought to be joyful in the

prospect of hastening to Christ by a speedy departure. How does our Lord Himself instruct us on this very head? 'Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' Who does not wish to be free from sorrow? Who would not hasten to joy with alacrity? Since then to see Christ is to rejoice, and since, till we do see Him, we can have no true joy; what blindness and infatuation is it to be in love with the pressures, troubles, and tears, of the world, and not rather to hasten to that joy which can never be taken away.

"Let that man indeed fear to die, who, not being born again of water and of the Spirit, is obnoxious to the fires of hell; who, not being a partaker of the cross and passion of Christ, dreads eternal flames. To such an one life is a desirable object, because it delays his sufferings. Wherefore, as the present mortality is awfully destructive to Jews, Heathens, and the enemies of Christ; so to the faithful servants of God does it afford a salutary removal. The righteous are called to a place of refreshment, and the wicked are hurried to a place of punishment. Believers enter sooner upon a state of security; and unbelievers anticipate their doom.

"May we not further remark, that God has gracious purposes to accomplish in a season of mortality. Through fear of sharing in the general distress, the lukewarm are inflamed, the negligent

are awakened, the slothful are stimulated, apostates are brought back to the Church, and heathens are induced to believe. Many old and faithful servants of God are dismissed to their peaceable home, and fresh and numerous forces are enlisted for future battles.

“ Let us therefore welcome, beloved brethren, that day which will consign each of us to our proper habitation, will rescue us from the various perplexities of the world, and restore us to Paradise and the kingdom of heaven. Who that sojourns in a foreign land would not hasten to return to his country? Our country, so let us deem it, is Paradise, even as we reckon the patriarchs our fathers. There great numbers of dear friends expect us. Our parents, brothers, sons, long for our arrival; a large and goodly company, secure of their own eternal felicity, and only solicitous for ours. How great will be the mutual joy to them and to us, when we see and embrace each other! What will be the pleasures of those heavenly kingdoms, where we shall live eternally without fear of dying! What perfect and perpetual felicity! There is the glorious choir of apostles: there the company of exulting prophets: there the innumerable multitude of martyrs crowned with victory over trials and sufferings: there chaste triumphant virgins: there the compassionate, who, in food and benefaction to the poor, formerly fulfilled the righteous precept of our Lord, are graciously rewarded, and receive heavenly riches, in

exchange for earthly possessions. To these, my beloved brethren, or rather to Christ, let us hasten with all avidity. Let God and our Lord Christ perceive that this is the grand object of our desires, and the settled purpose of our mind and faith. He will bestow the most ample rewards of glory to such as manifest the greatest love to Him."

A short time after this dreadful pestilence, the Christian benevolence of Cyprian and his people was again called into exercise. Some hoards of savages, having made an irruption into Numidia, carried away with them a great number of Christians into captivity. Cyprian was informed of this melancholy event by some of the bishops of that country. He in consequence immediately collected a considerable sum of money for the redemption of his captive brethren, which he forwarded with the annexed letter of condolence to the bishops of Numidia. His feelings and conduct on this occasion will be best described in his own words.

"With much heartfelt sorrow, and not without tears, we read the letters, which you wrote to us in your tender solicitude for our captive brethren and sisters. For who can withhold his tears on such occasions, or refrain from considering the grief of his brother as his own? The apostle Paul himself remarks, 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the members rejoice with it;' and again, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak?' We should

therefore regard the captivity and afflictions of our brethren as our own, since we are all incorporated together as one body."

He afterwards adds, " We have all agreed, with great cheerfulness, to send a liberal contribution for the assistance of our brethren. Our religion at all times prompts us to perform so Divine a work ; but more especially under such circumstances of aggravated affliction. Whereas the Lord says, in his gospel, ' I was sick and ye visited me,' how much more will it turn to our account when He will say, ' I was a captive, and ye redeemed me !' When again He says ' I was in prison and ye came unto me,' how much more honourable for us, must it be for Him to say, ' I was a slave to barbarians, immured and bound in fetters by them, and ye rescued me from the dungeon of my slavery ; ye shall receive a recompence from the Lord in the day of judgment !'

" We indeed feel very thankful to you for admitting us to share in your solicitude, and in so excellent and necessary a work ; for offering us such fruitful fields, in which we may deposit the seeds of our hope in full expectation of an abundant harvest. We have sent you a hundred thousand sesterces*, the collection of the clergy and people belonging to my church, which you will take

* It is calculated that this sum would amount to above 780*l*. which must have been a very considerable sum in that day, when money was so much more valuable than in ours.

care to distribute in a proper manner. We heartily wish that no such occasion may happen in future, and that our brethren may be protected by the favourable providence of God from similar calamities. If, however, for the trial of our faith and charity, any such affliction should again befall you, do not hesitate to inform us ; and rest assured that our church and all our brethren will heartily unite with you in prayer and in liberal contributions.”*

Thus did Cyprian exemplify the generous nature of pure and undefiled religion ; whilst the spirit which pervades this letter shews us from what source his graces flowed, and at the same time communicates a liveliness to his style which cannot fail to interest the reader.

We may observe, in all Cyprian's writings, the character of their author. He is always pious and fervent in himself, and therefore animated and copious in his language. The stores of nature are explored for imagery whereby to express the fullness of his soul ; and, though his analogies are not always chaste and simple, they evidently appear to be the effect of holy contemplation, and are used to impress upon his own mind, and on that of his readers, the importance of his subject.

Those who are conversant with the writings of Tertullian will be struck with the similarity between the style of Cyprian and that father, though they

* Epis. 62.

will probably be disposed to assign the merit of greater energy and terseness to Tertullian, and that of a more luxuriant fulness to Cyprian. A little anecdote recorded of Cyprian will naturally account for the similarity we have noticed, whilst the distinctive character of the two fathers will as satisfactorily account for the difference. The secretary of Cyprian, who long survived him, was accustomed to relate, that Cyprian never passed a day without reading something from Tertullian ; and that he would often say to him, ‘ Bring me my master,’ meaning thereby that author.

CHAPTER VII.

Cyprian attends different councils.—He is banished to Curubis.—His letter to the Christians in the mines.—He returns to Carthage.—His condemnation, martyrdom, and character.

DURING the first part of the reign of Valerian,* the Christians were not merely exempt from persecution, but experienced many marks of public approbation. The emperor's palace was filled with them; and he himself appeared to be their friend and protector.

Nothing remarkable is mentioned of Cyprian during this period, except that he wrote several letters on different important subjects to various individuals and Churches, and also occupied a conspicuous place in several councils; some of which seem to have been convened on subjects unsuitable to the dignity of such meetings, unless indeed matters of greater importance engaged their attention than those which are specifically referred to by Cyprian.

These assemblies were frequently convened after the close of the second century, when the deliberations of the bishops were assisted by the advice

* A. D. 253 to 257.

of a few distinguished presbyters, and sanctioned by the approbation of the Christians who attended. At first, it is probable that all the bishops who were present were on a perfect equality ; but, in the course of a little time, the advantage of a common head or president being perceived, that office was naturally assigned to a prelate who seemed to command additional respect, either from the extent of his diocese, or the superiority of his abilities. This circumstance, which in its origin appeared beneficial to the cause of religion, ultimately proved most injurious to it. The presidents carried from the assembly too elevated ideas of their own dignity ; and the lofty titles of METROPOLITANS and PRIMATES, which were soon after bestowed upon them, were imperceptibly preparing them for usurping authority over their episcopal brethren. Nor did the evil stop here. After a time, a desire of pre-eminence and power prevailed amongst the metropolitans themselves, each affecting to display the claims of his own see to peculiar dignity and respect. Hence originated, in after ages, the feuds and contentions between the bishops of the most celebrated cities in Christendom ; and hence at length were generally awarded to the Roman Church that supreme deference and respect, which it had long claimed on the twofold plea of its own political importance, and its being the supposed residence of the apostle Peter.

But, to return to the time of Cyprian, on one occasion it was canvassed, whether infants might

be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, or whether they ought to wait till the eighth, according to the ancient law of circumcision.—The council unanimously adopted the former opinion.

In a letter to Fidus, who appears to have consulted the council on that subject, Cyprian, in the name of that assembly makes the following observations. “ As to the case of infants, who should not, as you conceive, be baptized within the second or third day after their birth ; but, according to the time appointed by the law for circumcision, receive the sanctification of baptism on the eighth day ; we were all of the contrary opinion. We unanimously concluded that the mercy and grace of God ought not to be denied to any child of man. For since the Lord says, in His gospel, ‘ The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them,’ as far as in us lies, we should use our endeavours that no soul be lost. Spiritual circumcision ought not to be deferred by any law which was appointed for carnal circumcision. Moreover, if remission of sins is granted to believers, though they may formerly have been the greatest sinners against God, and no one is prohibited from baptism and from grace ; much less ought an infant to be debarred, who, being just born, can be guilty of no sin, except that, being carnally produced according to Adam, he hath, by his first birth, contracted the infection of the original

death*. Our decision, therefore, dearest brother, in the council was, that no one should be prohibited by us from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful, kind, and loving, to all. And as this rite is generally to be observed; so we think it especially regards new-born infants, who have more affecting claims upon our help and the Divine mercy, because in that early age they can only supplicate with cries and tears.”†

The preceding quotation from Cyprian is important, as it exhibits a clear testimony of the faith of the ancient Church in the doctrine of original sin, and at the same time affords a powerful argument in favour of infant baptism. “Here is an assembly of sixty-six pastors,” remarks Mr. Milner, “men of approved fidelity and gravity, who have stood the fiery trial of some of the severest persecutions ever known. Before this holy assembly a question is brought, not whether infants should be baptized at all; none contradicted this; but whether it is right to baptize them immediately, or on the eighth day? Without a single negative they all determined to baptize them immediately. This transaction passed in the year 253. Let the reader consider, if infant baptism had been an innovation, it must have been now of a considerable standing. The disputes concerning Easter, and other very uninteresting points, shew that *such* an innovation

* Contagium mortis antiquæ primâ nativitate contraxit.

† Epis. 64.

must have formed a remarkable æra in the Church. The number of heresies and divisions had been very great. Among them all such a deviation from apostolical practice as this *must* have been remarked. To me it appears impossible to account for this state of things, but on the footing that it had ever been allowed; and, therefore, that the custom was that of the first churches.”*

Whilst the pacific spirit of Valerian still continued to protect the Christians, a controversy arose among them, which reflects no honour on Cyprian and the other bishops of Africa. The question was, whether persons returning from heresies into the Church ought to be re-baptized. On this subject there was a difference of opinion; one party, at the head of which was Stephen, bishop of Rome, acknowledged the validity of such baptism, provided it were performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the other, consisting of eighty-seven bishops, assembled in council at Carthage, totally denied its efficacy. The latter sentiment was not merely adopted by Cyprian, but maintained in a spirit and language unworthy of so good a man. In the council, and afterwards in various letters, he persisted in declaring that the baptism performed by all separatists was null and void; and insisted on the necessity of re-baptizing those who had received this ordinance before their admission into the communion of the general Church.

* History of the Church of Christ.

The different suffrages of each bishop are still retained in Cyprian's works. To the professed admirers of ecclesiastical antiquities the perusal of the whole may be interesting; but the generality of readers will probably be satisfied, and at the same time entertained, by a small selection from them.

I.—*Cæcilius, of Bilta.*

I know of but one baptism, and that only in the Church; any out of it is a perfect nullity, &c.

III.—*Polycarp, of Adrametum.*

They who hold the validity of heretical baptisms do, in effect, disallow of our's.

IX.—*Nicomedes, of Segermæ.*

My opinion is, that heretics should be baptized upon their being admitted into the Church, because out of it sinners cannot obtain the remission of their sins.

XVIII.—*Sedatus, of Thuburbo.*

Just as the water, being consecrated in the Church by the prayer of the bishop, washes away sins; so does it increase them, when polluted, and, as it were, cankered by the words of heretics. Wherefore we ought to use all pacific means to induce those, who are tainted with heretical error, to receive the true and only baptism of the Church,

without which they will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

XXXVII.—*Vincentius, of Thibaris.*

We are well assured that heretics are worse than Heathens. If, therefore, they are brought to a sense of their wretched state, and wish to come over to the Lord, we have an unerring rule to proceed by, which our Lord gave in charge to His apostles, saying, “Go ye and lay on your hands in My name, and cast out devils.” And in another place, “Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Wherefore it appears that they may obtain the promises of Christ, first by imposition of hands in their exorcism, and afterwards by regeneration in their baptism; and I know of no other lawful way of their being admitted.

LX.—*Rogatianus, of Nova.*

Christ was the founder of the Church, the devil of heresy. How then can the synagogue of Satan be entitled to administer the baptism of Christ?

LXX.—*Verulus, of Rusiccade.*

A heretic cannot give what he does not possess, much less a schismatic, who has lost what he once had.

LXXXVII.—*Cyprian, of Carthage.*

The letter which I have written to our colleague, Jubaianus, fully expresses my opinion, viz. that heretics, being called, on the authority both of evangelists and apostles, adversaries of Christ and antichrists, should, when they come over to the Church, be baptized with the only baptism of the Church; so that from adversaries they may become friends, and from antichrists Christians.

The administration of the emperor Valerian was distinguished by a levity and inconstancy ill suited to the gravity of the Roman Censor. In the former part of his reign he surpassed in clemency those princes who had been suspected of an attachment to the Christian faith. In the last three years and a half, listening to the insinuations of Macrianus,* his Prætorian prefect, he adopted the maxims, and imitated the severity, of his predecessor.

Our African prelate, who had escaped the ravages of the two preceding persecutions, at length fell a victim to the present; but by slow degrees,

* This worthless minister, who rendered his master formidable only to the oppressed subjects, and contemptible to the enemies of Rome, was fondly attached to the superstitions of Egypt. Eusebius, on the authority of Dionysius, charges him with magical practices; and relates, that in celebrating these horrid orgies he slaughtered children, and tore out the intestines of new-born infants.

and under circumstances of comparative lenity. His character, indeed, as well as his station, seemed to mark him out as the most conspicuous object of envy and of danger.

In the year 257, Paternus, the proconsul of Africa, summoned Cyprian to appear before him in his council-chamber. He there acquainted the holy prelate with the imperial mandate, which he had just received, requiring that those who had abandoned the Roman religion should immediately return to the practice of the ceremonies of their ancestors. "I am a Christian," replied Cyprian, "devoted to the worship of the true and only Deity, to whom I offer up daily supplications for the safety and prosperity of the two emperors, my lawful sovereigns." On being threatened with banishment by the proconsul, unless he returned to the Roman religion, he exclaimed, "He is no exile who has God with him; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." The pro-consul then enquired, where they might find his presbyters. With modest confidence Cyprian pleaded the privilege of a citizen, in declining to answer this question, and reminded him of the edicts made by the best emperors against informers. "They ought not, therefore," he added, "to be discovered by me; and you yourselves do not approve of men, who offer themselves voluntarily to you." "I will make you discover them by torments," replied Paternus. "By me," the intrepid bishop calmly rejoined, "they shall not be discovered." "Our

princes," exclaimed Paternus, "have directed, that Christians should hold no conventicles; and whoever breaks this rule shall be put to death." "Do what you are directed," was the reply of Cyprian.

The proconsul, however, was not disposed to hurt him. Probably he respected the character of the man, who by this time must have been highly esteemed in Africa, on account of his commanding talents and active benevolence. After having, therefore, made some additional and ineffectual attempts to work on his fears, he banished him to Curubis, a small town, about fifty miles from Carthage. Many mitigations, however, accompanied the exile of this bishop. The situation was pleasant, the air good, and by his own desire he was accommodated with private lodgings. His solitude was also frequently enlivened by the letters, visits, and congratulations, of the faithful.

Whilst Cyprian continued in exile, he was informed that nine bishops, with several priests and deacons, and a great number of Christians, of all ages and both sexes, were condemned to labour in the mines, and treated with every indignity. Always ready for the performance of every good work, the venerable prelate addressed a letter to them on this occasion. The following extract from it strikingly exhibits the character and piety of the writer.

"The honour due to you, blessed and beloved brethren, would have called me to visit and em-

brace you, had I not, for the confession of the name of Christ, been myself confined within certain boundaries ; but, in such manner as I am able, I give you my company. Though I am not allowed to visit you in person, I am present with you in spirit and affection, and will endeavour to express my very soul to you in my letter. How do I exult in your honours, and reckon myself a partner with you ; not indeed in suffering, but in the communion of love. How can I be silent, when I hear such glorious things of my dearest brethren, whom Divine providence has so distinguished. Some of you have already finished the course of martyrdom, and are now receiving crowns of righteousness from the Lord ; whilst others, yet confined in prisons or in the mines, by the very delay of their sufferings encourage our brethren in their fortitude and constancy, and at the same time ensure to themselves a greater reward in heaven. O happy feet, bound at present with fetters, you will hereafter enjoy an everlasting freedom with the Lord ! The malice and cruelty of your persecutors may detain you for a season in bonds ; but you will soon pass from earth and its sorrows to the kingdom of heaven. In the mines you have not a bed on which the body may repose ; but Christ is your rest and consolation. Your limbs, fatigued with labour, have only the ground to lie upon ; but surely it is no punishment so to lie down with Christ. You have no baths, in which to wash your defiled limbs ; but you are inwardly and spiritually cleansed from all

pollution. Your allowance of bread is at present scanty ; but man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word of God. You are in want of clothes, to defend you from the cold ; but he who has put on Christ is abundantly covered and adorned. The hair of your head half shaved presents a dismal appearance ; but since the head of the man is Christ, your head, illustrious for the name of the Lord, must needs be comely. How will all these deformities, which appear so detestable in the eyes of the Gentiles, be recompensed with proportionable honours ! How will this short and transient punishment be exchanged for a bright reward of eternal glory, when our Lord will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.”*

On the arrival of a new proconsul, Galerius Maximus, Cyprian was recalled from banishment ; and, though not allowed entire liberty, he was permitted to reside in his own gardens, in the neighbourhood of Carthage, and was enabled again to direct the affairs of the Church. This was, however, but a short respite to his afflictions : he soon heard that the rage of the persecution was becoming more violent in the Roman capital ; and, expecting that it would speedily spread its desolating fury over the African Church, he begged that the intelligence might be circulated in all places among the

* Epis. 76, according to the Oxford edition, which is the one invariably referred to, in this life.

brethren, not to excite their fears, but that having the image of death before them they might arm themselves against it with Christian principles, and in the fulness of faith might be prepared to meet the approaching events with joy.

At length, exactly one year after Cyprian was first apprehended, an imperial warrant was issued against the Christian teachers in Africa. Conscious that from the eminence of his rank and character he should be selected as one of the earliest victims, Cyprian was at first inclined to provide for his safety by flight. But judging it improper, under existing circumstances, he soon returned to his usual residence, and employed himself in exhorting and comforting his people, being anxious to be taken by the messengers of death whilst so engaged. He was accordingly seized in his garden by two officers of rank, deputed by the proconsul for that purpose, who placed him between them in their chariot, and conducted him to one of their own houses in Carthage, as the proconsul was not then at leisure to examine him. He was here treated with the greatest courtesy. An elegant supper was provided for him; and his Christian friends were allowed to enjoy his society, whilst the streets were filled with a great multitude of the faithful, watching around the doors all night, in anxious and afflictive expectation of the fate of their revered bishop and father.

On the morning of the following day Cyprian was carried before the tribunal of the proconsul;

who, after informing himself of his name and situation, commanded him to offer sacrifices, and pressed him to reflect on the consequences of disobedience. "I pity your case," he continued; "you would judge better to consult your safety, and not to despise the gods." "My safety and my strength," replied the martyr, "is Christ the Lord, whom I desire to serve for ever." "You must, then," rejoined the proconsul, "be an example to the rest, that by the shedding of your blood they may learn their duty." He then passed sentence upon him in the following terms: "Let Thascius Cyprian be immediately beheaded, as the enemy of the gods of Rome, and as the chief and ringleader of a criminal association, which he has seduced into an impious resistance against the laws of the most holy emperors, Valerian and Gallienus." "God be praised," exclaimed the intrepid martyr, whilst a general cry of "We will die with our holy bishop," arose from the attending multitude of Christians, who were waiting at the gates of the palace.

The scene that now followed may more easily be conceived than described. The deepest dejection was apparent in every countenance. Keen was the anguish of their minds; but it was not the sorrow of those who have no hope. They were now bidding an adieu to their beloved pastor; final, indeed, as it respected this world, but not eternal. A ray of hope illumined the darkness that surrounded them, and enabled the mourners to look beyond the cloud of time to the regions of eternal day. Faith

pictured to their minds the exhilarating prospect of immortality, and whispered in their ears the assurance of another and a blessed meeting, when God would wipe away all tears from their eyes, and sorrow and sighing flee away for ever.

As soon as the sentence was pronounced against him, Cyprian was led away, under a guard of tribunes and centurions, to a spacious plain, in the neighbourhood of the city, surrounded with trees. A great multitude of spectators were already assembled. Immediately on his arrival Cyprian took off his mantle, and, kneeling down, engaged in fervent prayer. His presbyters and deacons, who were permitted to accompany him, then tied his hands, and several Christians spread linen on the ground to receive his blood. The martyr then directed that five and twenty pieces of gold should be given to the executioner; and shortly after, with one blow, his head was severed from his body.*

His corpse remained for some hours exposed to the curiosity of the Pagans. At length the Christians removed it during the night, and afterwards buried it in a splendid manner, in the neighbourhood of Carthage. Cyprian suffered martyrdom in the year of our Lord two hundred and fifty eight.

Thus terminated the earthly career of this eminent father. From the gentle manner of his martyrdom, and the respectful treatment that was

* See Acts of his martyrdom, and Pontius's *Life of Cyprian*.

shewed him during his preceding trial, we may infer that he possessed virtues that commanded the veneration of his enemies. Amongst the Christians, both in Europe and Africa, he was eminently revered and loved: and in after ages, as Augustine informs us, the anniversary of his martyrdom was every where observed. Called to the knowledge of Christ, as he himself remarks, "on the borders of old age," he made an astonishing progress in Divine things; and the subsequent years of his life were most zealously and indefatigably employed in promoting the cause of Christian piety, not only among his own people, but also in distant countries. Agitated by labours and afflictions, living amongst open enemies and heretical professors, his spirit was at times embittered, and his language harsh and intolerant; yet he was always an affectionate pastor to his people, a liberal benefactor to the indigent, and a wise and tender counsellor to the confessors. As a bishop, his zeal and activity have never been exceeded; at the same time his attention to discipline was equally removed from the extremes of negligent remissness and impracticable severity. "In fine," to adopt the language of one of his celebrated admirers and biographers, "if he had not been a *Christian*, one might have held him forth to the world as a *great* man; if it be the part of a great man to unite, in a large and capacious mind, many virtues, and each of them in a high degree

of perfection;—virtues, too, which are opposite in their nature, and which rarely meet in firm consistence in the same subject; for example, vigour and mildness, magnanimity and mercy, fortitude and prudence, warmth of temper and accuracy of judgment; and, above all, zeal and discretion.”*

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ.

DIONYSIUS,

BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA.



CHAPTER I.

Dionysius appointed Catechist of Alexandria, and afterwards bishop.—His account of the persecution, under the reign of Philip.—He retires during the Decian persecution.—His conduct respecting the Novatian schism, and the controversy on heretical baptism.—He is banished during the Valerian persecution.

THE farther we proceed in the third century, the more we are struck with the declension, in doctrine and conduct, which had now so generally taken place amongst the professors of Christianity. Instead of beholding the admirable simplicity which pervaded the creed of the primitive Christians, we find their sentiments corrupted by the unhallowed mixtures of Gentile philosophy, the chimeras of metaphysicians adopted as articles of faith, and the noble and invincible integrity which characterised their early predecessors, in too many instances.

lowered down to the diminutive standard of their Heathen neighbours. There were still some disciples, however, (to adopt the emphatic language of Jerome,) “in whose breasts the blood of our Lord was still warm, and whose faith was lively and vigorous;” men who not merely shewed to whom they belonged, but demonstrated by the whole of their deportment that real religion is invulnerable in its nature; that the external form of Christianity may change with the manners of the age, and the circumstances of the day, but the spirit of it is always like that of its Author.

Among persons of this description the subject of the present narrative occupies a conspicuous place. For many years he filled an important station in Alexandria; where, with apostolic zeal, he inculcated the pure doctrines and precepts of Christianity; and by his own personal attainments shewed what proficiency a fallen but renewed creature, may make in the “excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Dionysius is generally supposed to have been a native of Alexandria; but the exact time of his birth is not known. He is said to have been descended from an honourable and wealthy family, and for some years to have been involved in the darkness and errors of Paganism. Having manifested from his childhood a love of learning, he became at length a pupil of the illustrious Origen, under whom he made a suitable improvement in various branches of literature. We have no information

respecting the time and manner of his conversion to Christianity, except from a short extract of one of his letters, in which he mentions, that, by carefully reading and examining the books that came to his hands, he was converted to the faith. His life, however, affords us a decided evidence of the reality and genuineness of his piety.

In the year 232 Heraclas, who had succeeded Origen in the presidency of the celebrated school of Alexandria, was promoted to the bishopric of that place. His removal from the school made way for Dionysius; who for sixteen successive years faithfully performed the important duties of the catechetical office; and was then chosen bishop of Alexandria, in the room of Heraclas, who died during the preceding year.

Dionysius had not long entered upon his episcopate before a dreadful persecution broke out in Alexandria, which deserves the more to be recorded, as Philip, who was at that time emperor, was always friendly to the Christians, and manifested a particular reverence for their ministers. The following is the account which Dionysius gives of the origin and circumstances of this persecution, in a letter to Fabius, bishop of Antioch: “ A certain man, a soothsayer and poet, and whatever else he was, a promoter of great disorder in our city, stirred up the malice of the Gentiles against us, and inflamed them with zeal in behalf of their own superstitions. Stimulated by him, and receiving full permission to put their wicked

purposes into execution, they considered the putting us to death as merely a work of piety. They first seized upon an aged man, named Metras, and ordered him to utter certain atheistical words; and, on his refusing to comply, they struck him on the body with clubs, pricked him in the face and eyes with sharp reeds, and at length, dragging him to the suburbs, they there stoned him to death. They then hurried a faithful woman, whose name was Quinta, to the idol-temple, and urged her to worship the gods; and on her turning away, and manifesting the greatest abhorrence at the proposal, they bound her feet, and dragged her over the rough pavement through all the city. They then dashed her against mill-stones, and scourged her; and at length, having led her back to the same place, they put her to death. After this, with one accord, they all broke into the houses of the godly; each rushing into those of his neighbours, whom he knew to be of that description, spoiling and plundering them. The more valuable part of their goods they retained for themselves; and such as were made of wood, or were of less value, they burnt in the streets; so that the city appeared as if it had been taken by an enemy. The brethren hereupon withdrew, and secreted themselves by flight, taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, like those spoken of by Paul. Nor do I know that any of them who fell into their adversaries' hands denied the Lord, with the exception of a single individual. About the same time they seized

an aged virgin, a truly admirable woman, whose name was Apollonia, whom they smote on the face till they dashed out all her teeth. They then kindled a fire before the city, and threatened to burn her alive, unless she repeated after them certain impious words. Apollonia requested a short respite, which being granted to her, she immediately leaped into the fire, and was consumed. They then seized upon Serapion, in his own house, whom they tortured in the most cruel manner, and broke all his bones, and then cast him down headlong from an upper room. There was now no road for us (neither public nor private) which we could pass in safety, either by night or day; for in every direction the people were continually crying out, that whoever refused to repeat their blasphemous words should be dragged away and burnt. So things continued for a long time; until, a sedition and civil war breaking out among them, these wretches mutually inflicted on each other those cruelties which they had previously exercised upon us, and thereby afforded us some intermission of their fury.”*

The freedom from persecution, which the Christians now experienced, was, indeed, of short continuance. On the following year Decius, one of their bitterest enemies, ascended the throne; and, by his bloody edicts, revived their former sufferings, and that not only in Alexandria, but throughout

* Eusebius.

the whole of his extensive empire. To heighten the horrors of the persecution appears to have been one of the principal employments of the magistrates, during the short reign of this cruel tyrant. Swords, wild beasts, iron chairs, racks for stretching the human body, and hooks for tearing it, were instruments in high requisition against the Christians. Every malignant passion was stimulated to promote their apprehension, and every effort of ingenuity called forth to invent fresh modes of punishment. Numbers of the Christians fled from Alexandria to the neighbouring woods and mountains to avoid their assassins; several of whom were devoured by wild beasts, and others, being seized by the Arabs and barbarous Saracens, were reduced to the most abject slavery. During this time of trial many apostatized from the faith: but there was still a glorious army of martyrs, "who glorified God in the fires;" and, what is most remarkable, some of their greatest enemies were miraculously and suddenly converted to Christianity.

Shortly after the emperor's persecuting edict arrived at Alexandria, Sabinus, the Roman governor, gave orders for apprehending Dionysius. But his life was on this occasion singularly preserved. The officer sent to execute this order, supposing that he must necessarily have absconded in a time of such imminent danger, made a diligent search every where, except in the bishop's own house, where Dionysius continued four days after the commencement of the search: but on the fifth day,

having received a special direction (we are informed) from God, he removed, accompanied by his servants and many of the brethren. He was soon, however, seized by a band of soldiers, and in a short time again remarkably delivered by a company of drunken men, who, having terrified the guards, and insulted the bishop and his companions, suffered them to depart without farther molestation. Thus liberated from their enemies, they retired to a desert part of Libya, where they lay concealed till the storm was over.

In the year 251, the death of Decius abating the violence of the persecution, Dionysius again returned to his Church, which he found, as might be expected, considerably diminished, in consequence of the great numbers that had denied the faith, and lapsed into idolatry. He was permitted to remain in the undisturbed possession of his see for the five succeeding years; during which period he actively engaged himself in promoting the best interests of his people, and was, doubtless, an incalculable blessing to them.

In the mean time Dionysius was not an unconcerned spectator of the schism of Novatus,* which appears to have excited general interest in the Eastern churches, and as general dissatisfaction. Having heard that he professed that he had been compelled, by some of his brethren, to the separa-

* See the reasons for calling him Novatus, and not Novatian, in the life of Cyprian, page 338.

tion, Dionysius addressed to him the following letter: "Dionysius sends greeting to our brother Novatus. If you have been ordained unwillingly, as you say, make it appear by a voluntary resignation; for it is better to undergo any thing than to rend asunder the Church of God. Even martyrdom on this account would, in my opinion, be more glorious than for refusing to sacrifice to idols. For in the latter case a man suffers merely for his own soul; but in the former, for the welfare of the whole Church. Now, therefore, if you can oblige or persuade the brethren to unanimity, your merit would exceed your defection. This will no longer be imputed to you; that will be applauded. If you find it impracticable to draw over the disobedient, at any rate save your own soul. I wish you to be strong in the Lord, and studious of peace."*

About the same time Dionysius was also engaged in the controversy respecting the validity of heretical baptism. He appears to have inclined towards Cyprian's opinion in considering it as void, though he evidently manifested more temper and moderation in the controversy than the prelate of Carthage. Dr. Cave, indeed, conceives, that "he engaged more as a mediator than a party, writing to Stephen to use moderation in the case; as he did also to Sixtus, his successor, and most other bishops of that time."†

In the year 257 the emperor Valerian, who, at

* Eusebius.

† Cave's Life of Dionysius.

the commencement of his reign, had been kind to the Christians, began to persecute them, and continued his opposition with such malignity for three years and a half, that Dionysius considered him to be the beast foretold in the Revelations; “to whom was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power to continue forty and two months.”*

In the first year of this persecution Dionysius was brought before Æmilian, the prefect of Egypt, and ordered to recant. At the same time it was intimated to him, that his doing so might have a good effect on others. Unmoved by these commands and the insinuations accompanying them, he boldly replied, “We ought to obey God rather than man: I worship God, who alone ought to be worshipped.” “Hear the clemency of the emperors,” rejoined the prefect; “you are all pardoned, provided you return to a natural duty:—adore the gods who protect the empire; and forsake those things which are repugnant to nature.” Dionysius answered, “All men do not worship the same gods; but merely such as they severally suppose to be gods. But we worship the ONE GOD, the Maker of all things, who gave the empire to the most clement emperors, Valerian and Gallienus; and to Him we pour out incessant prayers for the prosperity and permanence of their administration.”

* Rev. xiii. 5.

But it was in vain for the holy prelate to refer to the acknowledged loyalty of the Christians, or to appeal to the unalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Destitute of all right sentiments of religion, and indifferent to the modes of worship which the supposed folly or fashion of the times might assume, the prefect contemptuously exclaimed, "What can be the reason why you may not still adore that God of your's, on supposition that he is a god, in conjunction with our gods?" To which, fully aware that no idolatrous worship could, without guilt, be joined with that of the true God, the venerable bishop exclaimed, "We adore *no other god*."*

The prefect then banished him to a village called Cephro, situated in one of the most comfortless parts of the desert of Libya; and at the same time prohibited his holding any assemblies. Nor could Dionysius obtain a delay of a single day, though he was then in a bad state of health.

* Eusebius.

CHAPTER II.

The persecution of Valerian.—He is taken prisoner.—Galerius protects the Christians.—Alexandria is successively afflicted by civil war, famine, and pestilence.—Dionysius's conduct on the occasion.—The controversies in which he was engaged.—His death.

THE bleak and dreary aspect of the country to which Dionysius was banished, was no improper emblem of the state of its inhabitants. They were an ignorant and brutish people ; wild as the beasts that prowled about their mountains, and uncultivated as the barren sands that surrounded them. On his first arrival they treated him very roughly, and pelted him with stones ; but, ere long, he was made the means of civilizing their manners, and converting several of them from idolatry to the Christian faith. And thus, not at Cephro only, but in several other places, during his banishment, he turned desolate wildernesses into gardens of the Lord. Nor, in the mean time, could all the malice and fury of the persecutors suppress the Christian assemblies at Alexandria, during the absence of their beloved pastor ; “ for, as their sufferings abounded for Christ, so their consolations abounded by Him.”

In one of his letters, having referred to the success which attended his preaching at Cephro, Dionysius continues, " When our ministry was here completed, God removed us to another place. At first, when we were ordered to depart, I undertook the journey with cheerfulness, although I knew not the place of our destination. But afterwards, when I heard we were to go to the neighbourhood of Colluthio, they that were with me can tell what an effect it had upon my mind. I proclaim it to my shame. At first I grieved immoderately, because it was reported to be a place destitute of brethren and of good men ; and also exposed to disturbances of travellers, and the incursions of robbers. However, I was greatly comforted upon the brethren suggesting to me that, though Cephro had brought us many bishops out of Egypt, so that we could hold large assemblies ; yet Colluthio, from its vicinity to the city, would enable us more frequently to enjoy the company of our beloved friends and acquaintance, and to hold assemblies in its suburbs. And so, indeed, it turned out." With such simplicity and ingenuousness of mind did this worthy bishop acknowledge his undue depression of spirits, and his subsequent consolations.

In another letter he gives the following brief account of the afflictions of others, which deserves to be transcribed as an evidence of the severity of Valerian's persecution. " It is needless to specify by name our numerous martyrs, as you are not

acquainted with them. It may suffice, therefore, to assure you, that persons of both sexes, and of every age and condition, have been crowned as conquerors in this combat; some having endured stripes, others fire, others the sword. You have heard how I, and Caius, and Faustus, and Peter, and Paul, when we were led bound by a centurion and his soldiers, were seized by certain men of Mareota, and drawn away by violence. But at present I, and Caius, and Peter, being alone, and separated from the rest of the brethren, are shut up in a dreary and most uncomfortable part of Libya, being distant three days' journey from Parætonium." He afterwards adds, "Some persons have hid themselves in the city, that they may secretly visit the brethren; as Maximus, Dioscorus, and Lucius, presbyters; for Faustinus and Aquila, being more generally known, wander up and down in Egypt. All the deacons died of the plague except Faustinus, Eusebius, and Chæremon. God empowered and strengthened Eusebius from the beginning diligently to attend to the confessors in prison, and to bury the bodies of the holy martyrs, not without imminent danger to himself. For the governor to this day ceases not his cruelty towards those who are brought before him; killing some, and torturing others, or leaving them to pine away in prisons and fetters. At the same time he forbids any person to approach them, and strictly enquires whether any one has been seen to do so. God,

however, still refreshes the afflicted by the assiduous and kind attention of the brethren.”*

Dionysius probably continued in banishment till the year 260, when Valerian, having undertaken an expedition against Sapor, king of Persia, was vanquished, and carried in triumph to the capital of the Persian empire. This cruel persecutor now learnt, from bitter experience, what it was to be given up to the power of a merciless tyrant. Bound with chains, and, at the same time, invested with the imperial purple, we are told, he was shewn as a spectacle of fallen greatness; and that, whenever the Persian monarch mounted his horse, he placed his foot upon the neck of this royal captive. At length, when Valerian sunk under the accumulated weight of years, shame, and grief, his skin was stuffed with such materials as made it retain the likeness of a human figure; and in this state was preserved for ages in one of the most celebrated temples of Persia.

The accession of Gallienus, the son and colleague of Valerian, to the undivided government of the empire, whilst it increased the general calamities of his people, restored peace to the persecuted Christians. About the year 262 he published edicts in their behalf; and even condescended to send to the bishops letters of license to return to their pastoral charges. One of these rescripts, as

* Eusebius.

preserved by Eusebius, runs thus: " The emperor, Cæsar Publius Licinius Gallienus Pius Felix Augustus, to Dionysius, Pinna, Demetrius, and the rest of the bishops. We have commanded, that the indulgence of our favour be published throughout the whole world, and that all persons withdraw from such places as are devoted to religious uses. For this purpose you are empowered to make use of the authority of our rescript, that no one may molest you. And this, indeed, which is lawful for you to execute, has been for some time granted by us. Wherefore Aurelius Cyrenius, the high steward, will observe the rescript which I have sent." By another edict the emperor directed that the places in which the Christians buried their dead should be restored to them.

Dionysius, though now permitted to return to his people, was far from being in a place of safety. The captivity of Valerian, and the insolence of his son, having relaxed the authority of the laws, the inhabitants of Alexandria had abandoned themselves to the ungoverned rage of their passions, and converted their unhappy country into the theatre of a civil war. All intercourse was cut off between the several parts of the city, every street was polluted with blood, and every building of any strength employed as a citadel; so that Dionysius, as if still in banishment, was forced to transact all his affairs with his people by letters. " It was safer," as he tells us, " to travel from the East to the West than from one part of Alexandria to another."

This gloomy period of history was distinguished by an awful assemblage of human calamities. The scourge of civil war was followed by a severe famine, the natural consequence of rapine and oppression ; which at the same time destroys the present produce and the hope of a future harvest. The famine was quickly succeeded by a dreadful plague, which was partly the effect of scanty and unwholesome food, though its extent and awful ravages point out that other causes must have contributed to it. During five successive years the pestilence continued, without interruption, throughout every province, city, and almost every family, of the empire. For some time 5000 persons died daily in Rome ; and several towns that had escaped the ravages of the barbarians were entirely depopulated.

During this distressing season Dionysius was by no means inactive. Now his faith in the Gospel was abundantly fruitful in those self-denying duties and beneficent exertions which the Christian principles can alone effectually and uniformly produce. In imitation of his Divine Master, whose life on earth displayed the most perfect example of all human excellence, this benevolent prelate "went about doing good." He was employed from day to day in the twofold capacity of a physician for the body and the soul, for whilst "he bound up the broken in heart and comforted those who mourned," he also in a literal sense "gave them medicine to heal their sickness." "The pure and undefiled

religion" which he possessed made him ready not only "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," but to attend the chambers of infectious disease and pining want, from which all who were not willing to sacrifice even life itself, in this work of mercy, fled far away.

Alluding to this awful season Dionysius remarks, "All places are full of lamentation, and every one is a mourner. Groanings are heard through the whole city, on account of the multitude of corpses and the daily deaths." He afterwards adds, "Many of our brethren, through their excessive love and brotherly affection, neglected themselves in consequence of their cleaving to one another. For whilst they incautiously attended upon the sick, and most carefully ministered to them, and healed them in Christ, they willingly died with them, having brought the diseases of others upon themselves. In this manner died the best of our brethren; of whom some were presbyters, some deacons, and others the most esteemed of our people. So that their deaths, being occasioned by their eminent piety and constant faith, are not less honourable than those of the martyrs."

Dionysius then remarks with what affectionate care the Christians attended the funerals of their friends, whilst the Pagans in the same city, through fear of receiving the infection, deserted and neglected theirs. These are pleasing evidences of the beneficial effects of Christianity, when really implanted in the heart of its professors. "*Non loqui-*

*mur magna, sed vivimus,"** is the appropriate motto of every genuine believer.

During the few remaining years of his life, besides the daily care of his own Church, Dionysius was zealously engaged in refuting several heresies, with which the faith of some was corrupted. Sabelianism seems now, for the first time, to have made its appearance. It consisted of a specious but vain attempt to remove all mystery from the sacred doctrine of the Trinity, by a confusion, or rather denial, of the Personality of the Son and Spirit. Dionysius makes the following remarks on this dangerous heresy, in a letter to Xystus, bishop of Rome: "Many brethren have sent their books and disputations in writing to me, concerning the opinion now agitated at Ptolemais, a city of Pentapolis, which contains much impiety and blasphemies against the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and also much infidelity respecting His only begotten Son, the first begotten of every creature, and the Word incarnate; and, lastly, much senseless ignorance relative to the Holy Spirit. I have sent them some letters, in which, according to the ability which God has given me, I have written at large; of which letters I forward you the copies."

In another letter, which he wrote to Philemon, a presbyter of the Church of Rome, he refers to his being favoured with a special revelation from God,

* Minucius Felix.

encouraging him to examine the different heresies of the day. "I have read," says he, "the works and traditions of the heretics; defiling my mind, undoubtedly, for a while, with their execrable opinions. But then, I have derived this advantage from them, that I can more easily confute them; and also feel an increasing detestation of them. One of the brethren, a presbyter, would have dissuaded me from this course, fearing the consequence, and telling me that my mind would be defiled; and, indeed, I am sensible he spoke truly. Nevertheless, I was confirmed in my original determination, by a vision from heaven; in which a voice commanded me to this effect: 'Read whatever comes to your hands, for you are able to examine and try all things; and this was the first occasion of your embracing the faith.' I therefore gladly received the vision, as agreeing with the apostolical precept, directed especially to such as are strong: 'Be ye skilful money changers.'"*

Some expressions of Dionysius, during the Sabellian controversy, not being considered as well guarded as they might have been, against the opposite extreme of what was afterwards denominated Arianism, he published another short tract, in which he explained his sentiments more fully, and shewed that his views were not less clear from the error of Sabellianism, which confounds the Persons, than that of Arianism, which divides the

* Eusebius.

substance. This statement appeared satisfactory to the whole Church, and was allowed to contain the sense of the Christian Scriptures on that important subject.

Different ages have had their peculiar temptations with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. The period in which Dionysius lived, and especially the succeeding century, were distinguished by subtle attempts to explain this mystery: the present, it has but too justly been observed, is not less characterized by attempts to subvert it. The latter is doubtless the more dangerous evil; but both are pregnant with pernicious consequences. It were well if every Christian would receive the grand doctrines of revelation, simply on the authority of their Divine Author, ever bearing in mind, that our religion is a sea which no human line can fathom, a mountain whose gigantic base may justly excite our admiration, but whose summit is wrapped in everlasting clouds, which the eye of God Himself can alone penetrate.

By far the most noted heretic in that day was Paul of Samosata, who attempted to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of His Divinity; and, indeed, his doctrinal sentiments may be identified with those of the modern Socinians. Besides his heretical notions, Paul appears to have been notorious for his haughty and immoral conduct. In a circular letter to the primitive churches throughout the empire he is represented as most cruel and oppressive in the discharge of his episcopal office; frequently

extorting large sums of money from his more opulent people, and converting to his private use a considerable part of the revenue of the Church. Nor were his pride and ostentation less conspicuous than his extortion. The tribunal and throne that he had erected, the pomp with which he paraded the streets, the abject multitude who solicited his attention, and the secular employments in which he was continually engaged, gave him rather the appearance of a civil magistrate than of a primitive bishop. In his addresses from the pulpit his conduct was highly irreverent. On these occasions he frequently made use of theatrical gestures and artifices, by which he called forth extravagant acclamations of praise from his servile admirers, whilst he publicly rebuked those who dared to resist his power, or refused to flatter his vanity. Thus was the most benign and holy religion that imagination can conceive converted into an instrument of avarice, selfishness, and tyranny. But at length the irregularity of Paul's life, and the heterodoxy of his sentiments, became intolerable. Several councils were convened, and refutations of his errors published, which at length terminated in his being degraded from the episcopal office, by the joint suffrages of upwards of 70 bishops.*

Advanced age, and increasing infirmities prevented Dionysius from attending on this occasion.

* See Eusebius.

He wrote, however, to the assembled bishops, giving his advice, and manifesting his abhorrence of the conduct and sentiments of the heretic. This was the last public act of this servant of God, who died shortly after, in the 12th year of the reign of Gallienus, and in the year of our Lord 265.

It is sincerely to be regretted that the accounts we have of this venerable father are so short and defective. In consequence of his eminent wisdom and attainments, Dionysius has not unfrequently been called the GREAT; and his piety, benevolence, and zeal give him an equal claim to the more honourable title of the GOOD. His loss must have been severely felt by the Eastern Churches; and especially by his own at Alexandria, over which he had presided upwards of seventeen years.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 11, line 13, for *day* read *days*.

33, last line, for *the cordiality* read *they cordially*.

88, line 4, dele *notwithstanding his youth*.

98, line 1, for *the sin of covetousness* read *sin through
covetousness*.

234, line 13, for *imoprtant* read *important*.

267, line 21, for *frequently* read *unfrequently*.

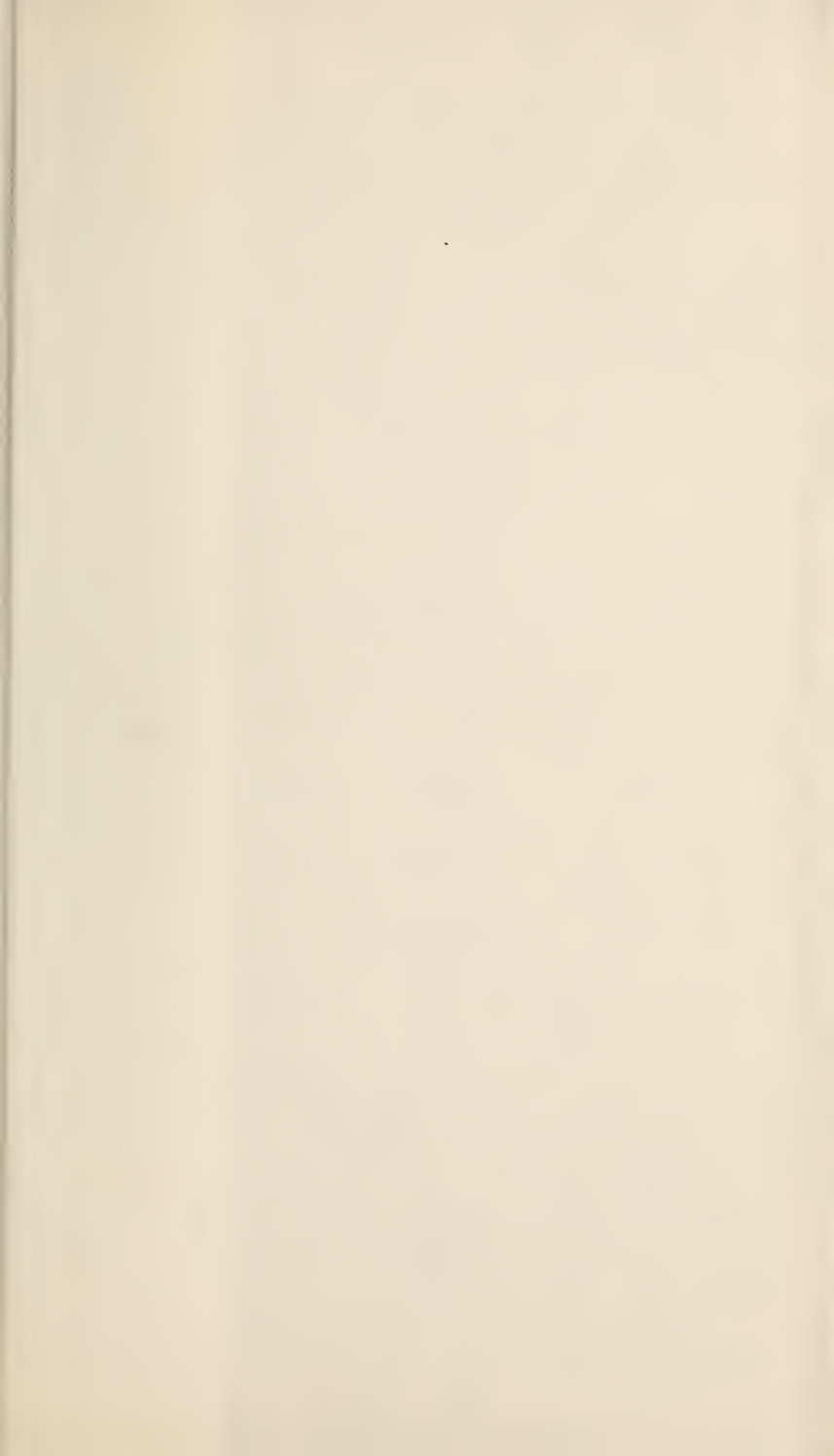
312, line 7, for *in the first* read *in the first book*.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2005

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